

Handsome Pocket Wallets and Penknives for Readers!

SEE
PAGE 2.

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The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY.

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WANTED BY THE POLICE!

A SHOCK FOR THE NEW FORM MASTER!

(One of the many dramatic incidents from this week's powerful story of Greedyriars.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Send along your joke or your Greyfriars limerick—or both—and win our useful prizes
of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to
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DO you know anything about the Sargasso Sea, chums? One of my Scottish readers, Gavin Macdonald, of Paisley, has been reading about a film which purports to depict that famous—and mysterious—ocean, and he wants me to tell him something more about it. Well, there are more "tall stories" told about this stretch of ocean than about any other part of the globe, and it just happens that I do know something about it, so I can give you some first-hand information.

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL TALES

are told about the Sargasso, but most people who tell them haven't the slightest idea of where it is situated. It is supposed to be a sea of dead ships, of flotsam and jetsam, and to be covered with weed of such density that ships cannot proceed through it. It is said to hold all sorts of secrets in its grip, and that once ships are enmeshed in its coils of sea-weed, they cannot get clear. Well, I am sorry to have to throw cold water on these yarns, but the plain fact is that all these yarns are

PURE BUNKUM!

The Sargasso Sea is a patch of "dead" water in the North Atlantic, and lies between two mighty ocean currents—one of which is the Gulf Stream. It forms a sort of backwater to these currents, and as the water is "dead"—that is, not disturbed by currents—the result is that seaweed grows there in great profusion. It is true, also, that bits of wreckage are edged out of the currents into the Sargasso, and from these facts the many stories are based. But I can assure you that the weed is not strong enough to bear a man, much less to impede the speed of a ship! Any sailor who has traded between Britain and the Gulf of Mexico must have sailed repeatedly across the Sargasso, and will tell you that the film producers' ideas about long-lost islands, and forgotten galleons exist only in their imagination!

Another thing that is worth knowing is that the Sargasso Sea changes its position! The currents which fringe it do not always run at the same speed, nor do they maintain a steady course, and, as they change, so the "dead" water changes and alters the position of the Sargasso. When I myself passed through the Sargasso, after a voyage to Mexico, I brought some Sargasso weed back with me as a souvenir—but you know how souvenirs have a habit of getting lost, and this was no exception!

MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY

this week against the 18th of January, for that was the day upon which Captain Scott reached the South Pole in 1912. It was an ill-fated expedition, as you all know, for, although Scott and his gallant band of British seamen reached the Pole, they laid down their lives on the return journey, and it was not until some time afterwards

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that the tragic tent in which they had died was discovered.

The annals of exploration contain few stories to rank with the gallantry of one of the band, Lieut.-Commander Oates, who, falling ill, and fearing that he was a drag on the rest of the party, walked out into a blizzard and disappeared—hoping that, without him, the rest would be able to reach safety. Scott described him as "a very gallant gentleman"—and I think everyone will say "Hear! Hear!"

HERE'S another naval query from A. F., of Dudley. He wants to know

WHAT IS A WAR-HEAD?

It's the explosive head of a torpedo, which is only put on when there is "something doing!" Torpedoes, as you doubtless know, are very expensive things—too expensive to be wasted on practice! Yet it is essential that torpedo practice should be carried out. Therefore, when torpedoes are being used for practice purposes, they are fitted with a dummy head, which does not explode if the torpedo should strike anything. Then the torpedo is retrieved after being fired, and put back again in its tube. The war-head, which is highly explosive, is kept in the magazine in peace time, and is only shipped when the vessel carrying torpedoes is out on active service.

Ready for a yarn? This one has been sent in by Gerald Garfinkle, of 3, Princes Gate West, Princes Park, Liverpool, who gets a penknife for it:

WHAT HE WANTED!



The doctor stood by the bedside and looked down gravely at the sick man.

"I cannot hide from you the fact that you are very ill," he said. "Is there anyone you would like to see?"

"Yes," said the sufferer faintly.

"Who is it?" asked the medical man.

"Another doctor!" came the faint reply.



To return to your questions. One comes from the West of Ireland, where many of the people are black-haired and dark-eyed. My reader wants to know "Why are many black-eyed people so hot-tempered?" I don't know, but I think I can tell him why so many hot-tempered people are black-eyed!

Dicky Nugent has sent me along a yarn for which he says he is prepared to vouch. Knowing Master Dicky as I do, I take it with the proverbial grain of salt. However, here's the yarn, which Dicky calls:

"SOME" ECHO!

A fellow was showing a new boy around the school, and took him to a

very pretty spot near the tuckshop.

"There's a wonderful echo here," he explained. "Call out 'Two bottles of pop!' and test it for yourself!"

The new boy did so. "I can't hear any echo!" he complained.

"No," was the reply, "but here comes the pop!"

I have an idea that Dicky sent along that yarn in the hope of getting a penknife, but, as he helped himself to a "sample" last time he was in my office, there's nothing doing! Besides, if the yarn is true, I know who the enterprising "guide" was who got the pop!

LIMERICKS are still rolling in! There is no lack of budding poets amongst you fellows! Here's another prize-winner—this time from Arthur Luscombe, 22, Duke's Road, Gosport, Hants:

A Greyfriars junior named Dutton,
Is as deaf as a leg of cold mutton.
He stutters and stammers,
But never tells crammers,
Like his study-mate, Bunter, the glutton!

Some time ago I told you about Colonel Cody (Buffalo Bill) and his Wild West show. This week a reader asks me if Buffalo Bill was the first man to start a show of this description. No! The first man to arrange this sort of entertainment was Barnum, the great showman. Barnum actually gave a "Wild West" show free, and yet netted £700 profit from it! It sounds impossible, but this is how it was done:

The show was arranged to be given at Hoboken, which is separated from New York by a river, and Barnum bought up the rights of the only ferry between the two towns for the day of the show. So, although no one paid for admission, the very fact that it was free attracted 24,000 people to the show, and, of course, they paid for their fares on the ferry. As a matter of fact, the profit of £700 which Barnum made was much more than if he had charged for admission, for in that case not half the people would have gone!

I am afraid I must hold over the rest of your queries until next week, as space is getting short. Meanwhile, we'll just have a look at what we've got in store for next week's issue. First and foremost, of course—Frank Richards! His long, complete Greyfriars yarn is entitled:

"THE MYSTERY MASTER!"

and you'll find it "full of meat." I'm not going to spoil your enjoyment of it by telling you exactly what happens, but you can take it from me that there's not a dull line in it. Is it necessary for me to say that? Perhaps not, for I've never struck a Frank Richards' yarn yet that had the slightest suspicion of dullness about it.

As for the serial,

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

well, any complaints? No! I thought not! Look out, then, for another enthralling instalment next week.

Dicky Nugent will be in his customary breezy form, and his contribution is entitled:

"JUSTLY REWARDED!"

I think it's sufficient to say that Master Dicky is his usual self in this yarn, which is calculated to raise miles of smiles.

There's another interesting article on "footer," together with a breezy poem by the Greyfriars Rhymester, and—you won't forget to "Come Into the Office," will you?

YOUR EDITOR.

Read and Enjoy Your Favourite Author's Latest Masterpiece—



WANTED^{BY} THE POLICE!

—featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the popular chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Extraordinary!

SOMETHING was "on." The most casual observer, glancing into the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars that morning, would have noticed that something was on.

Mr. Richard Steele, the new master of the Remove, undoubtedly noticed it.

Many times his keen grey eyes travelled over his class, with an inquiring and slightly perplexed expression in them.

The undercurrent of excitement in the Lower Fourth that morning was obvious. It leaped to the eye, as it were.

Every fellow in the Form seemed more or less affected by it.

Harry Wharton, head boy of the Form, had a cloud on his brow that told of troubled thought. When he felt the keen grey eyes travelling in his direction he kept his own on his desk.

Bob Cherry looked uncomfortable. Frank Nugent had a conscious look. Johnny Bull was thoughtful. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes rested on the Form master, with a curious look in them.

Skinner had a slight sneer on his thin face. Snoop had a malicious grin. The Boulder looked sarcastic.

Billy Bunter simply could not keep still.

Of all the members of the Remove, Bunter was the most excited—bursting with it.

His little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. He exchanged whispers and nods and winks with the fellows round about him.

But all the fellows shared the excitement, more or less. Even Lord Mauleverer sat up and took notice.

Whenever Mr. Steele's back was

turned there were whispers in the class. When his glance turned on the Form the whispers died away. But the suppressed excitement did not diminish. Rather, it increased.

Something—something of a very unusual nature—was "on."

Steele had been puzzled at first. He was still puzzled; but he was growing annoyed also. His clear-cut face, with its keen grey eyes and square, dominating chin, was growing very stern.

"Perhaps he suspected a 'rag.'"

Rags in the Remove room had been unknown in Mr. Quelch's time. And in the week or two that he had been at Greyfriars, Richard Steele had shown

Gee, boys! They reckon they've got a real live cracksman posing as a Form master at Greyfriars. Stand by for sensations!

that he could handle the Form quite as ably as Quelch. Still, it was possible that, as he was a new master, some of the unruly spirits in the Lower Fourth were bent on ragging. If so, Steele undoubtedly was the man to deal with them.

But if he waited for the excitement to come to a head and break out in the form of a rag, he waited in vain.

The Remove were orderly enough. The most troublesome members of the Form, like Bolsover major and Vernon-Smith, seemed to have no idea of giving trouble.

The Form was simply thrilling with excitement from end to end—for some unknown cause. Some topic of breathless interest was murmured and whispered.

Richard Steele was a keen man—a remarkably keen man. But he was rather at a loss now.

There had been nothing like this in

the Remove since he had taken temporary charge of the Form during the absence of Henry Samuel Quelch.

The subject of second lesson that morning was English history. Steele had selected a section of Green for the edification of the Remove. The natural effect of this should have been to make the Lower Fourth a little drowsy. Now even the eminent and learned Green failed to produce his usual effect. The Remove had never been more wide awake.

True, when Steele questioned his class the answers he received showed that the thoughts of the juniors were straying far from the "History of the English People."

They answered almost at random.

Obviously their thoughts were elsewhere.

Lines rewarded some of them; but, for once, the Removeites did not seem to care for lines.

Lines passed them by like the idle wind, which they regarded not. Lines might have fallen as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa of old, without stilling the strange excitement that thrilled the whole of the Lower Fourth.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter jumped at the voice of his Form master.

It seemed to startle him like a clap of thunder.

He had been whispering to another fellow, and he spun round to face Steele, with his eyes bulging behind his spectacles, his mouth open, and his breath coming in gasps.

"Bunter!" repeated Steele.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me, sir."

"What?"

"I never said a word, sir!"

"You were whispering to Snoop, Bunter," said Steele sternly.

"Oh, no, sir! I never said a word

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to Snoop, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never opened my lips, sir! I only said—"

"Take fifty lines, Bunter!"

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter, evidently too confused to know what he was saying.

Steele's eyes swept over the class again.

Fellows were watching him excitedly, oddly, expectantly. Only Harry Wharton kept his eyes on his desk.

Steele's square jaw set rather grimly.

"I do not quite understand this Form this morning," he said quietly. "Something appears to be the matter, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove looked up at last. He coloured as his eyes met the Form master's.

"You are head boy of the Form, Wharton! Can you enlighten me?"

Wharton did not answer.

Steele gave him a very penetrating look, but did not repeat his question. His glance travelled to Vernon-Smith. The peculiar, sarcastic expression on the Bounder's face had not escaped him. The Bounder obviously knew what was the cause of the excitement, and appeared to be deriving some sardonic amusement from it.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir?" said the Bounder coolly.

"You were speaking to Redwing a few minutes ago."

"Was I, sir?"

"You were! What did you say to Redwing?"

The Bounder paused for a second. Tom Redwing flushed uncomfortably. Fellows craned their necks to look at the Bounder and listen for his reply. Smithy, obviously had been saying something to Redwing on the topic that thrilled the Remove that morning. Steele wanted to know what it was. But even Steele was not likely to get much change out of the Bounder.

"I said it was a fine morning, sir!" answered Herbert Vernon-Smith, after that brief pause.

There was almost a gasp in the Remove. Redwing's face crimsoned; he was no hand at hiding his thoughts. Every fellow knew, just as Steele knew, that the Bounder's answer was a deliberate untruth.

Steele compressed his lips.

"You said to Redwing that it was a fine morning!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir—for the time of year!" added the Bounder thoughtfully.

There was a faint titter.

It died away under the searching glance of the Form master. Richard Steele's grey eyes were glinting now.

"If that is the truth, Vernon-Smith, you—"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

"Very good! You will take fifty lines for talking in class."

"You're very good, sir!" said the Bounder unperturbably.

"And if you are impertinent, Vernon-Smith, I shall cane you!" said Steele.

The Bounder did not reply to that. The new master was evidently getting his rag out, and Smithy did not want to be the one selected for the wreaking of his gathering wrath.

Steele turned to take a book from his desk.

The instant his back was turned whispering broke out in the Remove like a buzz of insects.

He turned back again.

There was dead silence.

Really, the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars was in an extraordinary state that morning.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Extra-Extraordinary!

"CHERRY!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes, sir?"

He started as he answered.

It was odd, how any Remove fellow that morning seemed startled if Mr. Steele's attention was directed to him specially. Some of them fairly jumped when he spoke to them.

Bob stared at his Form master in a fascinated sort of way. It even crossed Steele's mind, for a moment, that there might be a smut on his nose, or something of that sort. But a smut on the nose would not have caused all this unrest.

"On the subject of Cromwell—" said Mr. Steele.

The Remove were tackling Henry the Eighth in that lesson. Henry the Eighth was, in some ways, a more interesting figure than other monarchs. His extraordinary hobby of cutting off the heads of his wives gave him some little interest. Moreover, he was as fat as Billy Bunter. That gave a familiar touch to him in the minds of the Removes. They were less interested in his celebrated minister, Thomas Cromwell, with whom Steele was now dealing.

"Yes, sir!" said Bob hazily.

He had not been paying any attention to that lesson, any more than the other fellows. Other matters filled his mind, and he couldn't help it.

"What," asked Mr. Steele, "is the one bright spot in the career of Thomas Cromwell?"

"He—he cut off King Charles' head, sir!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Steele.

Such an answer might have been expected from Billy Bunter. It was not to be expected from any other fellow in the Form.

"Cherry! Give me your attention."

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

"I am not aware," said Steele, in a deep voice, "of what matter may be engrossing your thoughts. But while you are in class, Cherry, you will be good enough to pay attention to your lessons."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You are confusing Thomas Cromwell, the minister of King Henry VIII., with Oliver Cromwell, the Protector of later times."

"Oh!"

"The bright spot in the career of Thomas Cromwell was his loyalty to his fallen master, Cardinal Wolsey. You will write this out fifty times, Cherry, in order to impress upon your memory the fact that there have been two eminent men of the name of Cromwell in the history of your country."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" groaned Bob.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor!"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"In the reign of what monarch, Bunter, did the dissolution of the monasteries take place?"

This was, as the juniors would have said, an easy one. It would have been of no use putting a question to Billy Bunter unless it was an easy one. As the lesson dealt with the reign of the monarch who dissolved the monasteries, even Billy Bunter ought to have come up smiling, as it were.

But the things that William George Bunter did not know were as numberless as the sands on the seashore; and the things he did not remember would have filled whole libraries to overflowing.

Besides, Bunter was thinking of other

matters. He was handicapped by inattention as well as general thoughtlessness and obtuseness.

He blinked at Richard Steele.

"You will answer the question, Bunter."

"The—the question, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"At once."

"I—I didn't hear you, sir!" gasped Bunter, to gain time.

"In what reign," repeated Mr. Steele patiently, "did the dissolution of the monasteries take place?"

"Charles the Second, sir!" said Bunter, at a venture.

"Dear me!" said Steele, in a tired voice. "You are a very stupid boy. We are dealing with the reign of Henry the Eighth, yet you tell me that the dissolution of the monasteries took place in the reign of Charles the Second. Why?"

"Because—because he was a dissolute monarch, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove.

Steele smiled.

"You are a remarkably obtuse boy, Bunter!" he said.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You will write out that the dissolution of the monasteries took place in the reign of Henry the Eighth, fifty times!"

"D-d-d-did it, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"It did!"

"That isn't in my book, sir."

"What?"

"It really isn't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I can't remember whose reign it happened in, sir, but I'm sure my book says it only happened once."

"Naturally, it only happened once, Bunter," said Mr. Steele. "The monasteries having been dissolved, the same act could scarcely have been repeated. What do you mean?"

"But—but you said it happened fifty times, sir."

"I said that it happened fifty times!" repeated Mr. Steele, as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"Yes, sir! All the fellows heard you, sir," said Bunter, getting a little indignant. "You said quite plainly, sir, that I was to write out that the dissolution of the monasteries took place in the reign of Henry the Eighth fifty times."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You extraordinarily stupid boy!" gasped Steele. "You are to write out fifty times that the dissolution of the monasteries took place in the reign of King Henry the Eighth."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Do you understand now?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"

"What else can you tell me of the reign of Henry the Eighth, Bunter?" asked the patient Form master.

"Oh, lots, sir!" mumbled Bunter.

"I—I've been listening to everything you were saying, sir! I—I haven't lost a word."

"Very good! Then let us hear the result of the attention you have been giving your lesson. Proceed."

Bunter proceeded.

He had to say something, and, unfortunately, on the subject of that ferocious old gentleman, Henry Tudor, Bunter's fat mind was a perfect blank.

But all sorts of odds and ends were tucked away somewhere in Bunter's memory, though he was unable to sort them out. He drew at random on his remarkable stores of knowledge.

"He—he was called the Merry Monarch, sir—"

"Bunter!"

"I—I mean, he wasn't called the Merry Monarch, sir, because—because he never smiled again, sir! Being left



Three or four fellows grasped Bunter, and propelled him back into the Rag. "Yaroooh! Ow! Leggo!" wailed the fat Removeite.

in charge of the cakes in the neatherd's hut, he let them burn; and when the neatherd's wife scolded him, he said, 'Had I but served Julius Cmsar as I have served Pontius Pilate, he would never have said, "Kiss me, Hardy!"' "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove. "That will do, Bunter!" articulated Mr. Steele.

"Yes, sir! Mr. Quelch considered me rather good at history, sir," said Bunter complacently.

"You will come to my study after classes for an hour, Bunter," said Mr. Steele. "I must not waste the time of the Form."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Steele consulted his notebook.

"You will come to my study at five-thirty, Bunter."

Bunter blinked at him. There was deep uneasiness in the little round eyes behind the big spectacles.

"D-d-do you mean alone, sir?" asked Bunter.

"Eh? Of course."

"Oh, really, sir! C-c-can Toddy come with me?"

Steele stared at Bunter blankly.

"Todd? Todd is not in need of instruction in the rudiments of English history, Bunter. You will come alone."

"Wharton might come, sir—" stammered Bunter. "He—he's captain of the Form, sir, and—"

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir! But—"

"But what?"

"I—I'd rather not come alone, sir, if—if you don't mind. Of—of course, I ain't afraid."

"Afraid!" ejaculated Steele.

"Not at all, sir! Only—only if you wouldn't mind Wharton coming with me, and—Todd—and Bob—"

"Are you out of your senses, Bunter?" exclaimed the astonished Form master.

"Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir! You see, sir—"

"That will do, Bunter! I will not make an effort to follow the workings of your extraordinary mind," said Steele. "Be silent!"

"Sarcastic beast! Just like Quelch!" murmured Bunter to Snoop, as Steele turned his attention elsewhere.

The grey eyes gleamed at him.

"You have already been warned not to talk in class, Bunter. What did you say to Snoop?"

"Oh! N-n-nothing, sir."

"I order you to tell me immediately—"

"Oh dear! I—I never said you were a sarcastic beast just like Quelch, sir!" stuttered Bunter. "I wouldn't!"

Steele's face twitched.

"I shall cane you if you talk in class again, Bunter."

After which, Bunter did not talk in class any more. Second lesson went on to its end, and the Removes were dismissed for morning break. They left the Form-room silently, but immediately they were in the corridor a buzz of excitement broke out.

Steele glanced from the Form-room door.

The buzz instantly ceased. The groups broke up, and the Removeites streamed away.

For some moments, after the last of his Form had disappeared, Mr. Richard Steele stood looking out into the passage, a frown of deep perplexity on his brow. Then, with a slight shrug, he turned back into the Form-room.

Something—something extraordinary—had occurred to thrill the Lower Fourth with excitement, and as yet the new master of the Removes could not tell what it was.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Sensation of the Term!

"GAMMON!" said Bob Cherry. "The gammonfulness," said Hurree Jamset Rau Singh, "is terrific."

"Never heard such rot!" said Mark Linley.

"Absolute piffle!" said Johnny Bull.

"Tripe!" said Frank Nugent. "What do you think, Smithy?"

The sarcastic smile was on the Bounder's face as he listened to the comments of the Removes.

"I think there's no smoke without fire!" drawled the Bounder.

"That means that you think there's something in Bunter's fatheaded yarn!" demanded Peter Todd.

"I fancy so."

"You're an ass, then, old bean."

"I don't see it," remarked Skinner.

"Seems to me that the thing speaks for itself—fairly shouts, in fact."

"Looks like the truth to me," remarked Sidney James Snoop.

"The truthfulness is not great, my esteemed Snoop. It is the most idiotic of all the yarns of the preposterous Bunter."

"Takes the cake for sheer fatheadedness," said Bob Cherry. "You're not such an ass as to believe it, Smithy?"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "What does Wharton say?" he retorted.

"Nothing—so far as I know."

"Well, so long as Wharton says nothing, I shall fancy there's something in it," remarked the Bounder.

"Why, ass?"

"Wharton could knock the story on the head with a word if he liked. Why doesn't he?"

"I—I don't know."

Smithy laughed.

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"Well, he would if he could. He likes Steele. He's Steele's head boy—pulls with him quite as well as he did with Quelch. He wouldn't let this yarn go the rounds if he could knock it on the head."

Bob Cherry was silent. He, like other fellows, had been struck by the circumstance that Wharton had said nothing, so far, on the subject of the amazing story Billy Bunter had told.

That story was not only amazing, it was astounding! It had fairly electrified the Greyfriars Remove!

To many fellows it seemed impossible of belief. Other fellows heard it greedily. Skinner & Co., who disliked Mr. Steele, for the simple reason that Steele would not let them slack and frowst, fairly lapped it up. Skinner, at least, intended to make the most of that strange story. Skinner had been caned for smoking, which was quite sufficient reason for Harold Skinner to welcome anything that was "up against" the master who had replaced Quelch.

Even fellows who did not believe the story, were thrilled by the bare idea of the thing; greatly excited, even while they discredited the tale. Undoubtedly it was the sensation of the term in the Lower Fourth.

It had started the evening before.

Bunter, in possession of a tremendous secret, as he averred, had begun by confiding it to a friend or two.

Bunter really did not intend to let it go farther than that. Even Bunter realised that it was a serious matter to make such an accusation against a man in Mr. Steele's position in the school. Even Bunter understood that trouble might follow for the originator of the remarkable yarn.

But Bunter was Bunter, and it was the chief characteristic of Billy Bunter

that when his tongue began to wag he could not put the brake on.

The friend or two had grown into larger numbers. Before dorm Bunter had told the story—in strict confidence—to at least seven or eight fellows.

In the morning, before brekker, he had told five or six more—still, of course, as a great secret in deep confidence.

After breakfast every fellow in the Remove had heard it—from Bunter or from one another.

That was the cause of the intense excitement in the Remove Form-room that morning. With such a matter in their minds, the juniors fairly thrilled with excitement. If their Form master was, as Bunter averred, a man wanted by the police, it was the first time such an extraordinary situation had arisen at Greyfriars. It was unprecedented in the history of Greyfriars or any other school. Even if the story wasn't true, Steele at least was accused of being a law-breaker, and that was also unprecedented. The accusation was enough to cause a sensation.

Whether fellows believed it or not, there was something thrilling in the Form being taken by a man accused of being a law-breaker, a crackman, a man wanted by the police.

"It's gammon!" repeated Bob Cherry. "Just frabjous, fatheaded gammon! We all know Bunter's yarns!"

"The yarnfulness of the preposterous Bunter is terrifically absurd," said the nabob of Bhanipur.

"All rot, of course!" said Frank Nugent, but with a note of hesitation in his voice. The Bunder's argument had struck him forcibly. After all, why didn't Wharton quash that ridiculous story, as he might easily have done if it was true?

Wharton, certainly, did not share

Billy Bunter's love of spreading startling news. Wharton liked Steele, and pulled well with him. Why didn't he knock the story on the head?

"Wharton ought to speak out," said Johnny Bull. "We'd better ask him to, plainly. Where is he?"

"Why isn't he here?" smiled the Bunder. "He's generally with you men in break."

"He's in the House, I think," said Bob.

"And I can tell you why."

"Well, why, fathead?"

"Because he's keeping away—he doesn't want to be questioned," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I was watching him in Form; and I can tell you this—the story's true, or, at least, Wharton thinks it is."

"Rot!" said Bob uneasily.

"Piffle!" said Peter Todd.

"Draw it mild, Smithy!" said Squiff. "It's altogether too thick, you know. Steele a crackman! Oh, my hat!"

"Steele, the Courtfield crackman—the man who's been burgling up and down and round about the school since early last term!" said Hazeldene. "It sounds steep!"

"The steepfulness is terrific!"

"Steep or not, that's how it stands," said Skinner. "Look at it! You men all remember the day Wharton went with Bunter to Folkestone last term—missed trains or something—and were let in long after midnight by Barnes, the head chauffeur. They walked from Courtfield and passed Hogben Grange on the way. They saw a man climbing the park wall after midnight. We know that much is true, for we've had it long ago from Wharton."

"I know all that," said Bob.

"But—"

"Well, the next day we heard of the burglary at Hogben Grange. Quelch sent Wharton to the police station to report what he'd seen, and describe the man he and Bunter saw. That shows that Quelch thought the man was the burglar."

"It jolly well does!" said the Bunder. "And we've all heard Wharton's description of the man—a fellow with a square jaw! I've heard him mention him umpteen times—he called him 'The man with the square jaw,' because he didn't know his name. Well, I fancy every man here has noticed that Steele's jaw is as square as a die."

"The man himself's as square as a die," said Bob.

"I don't say he isn't. But he's the man those chaps saw clambering the wall of Hogben Grange on the night of the burglary."

"He can't be! After all, Steele's been here over a week—he came in Quelch's place the first day of the term. Bunter's only just recognised him as the man he saw that night."

"The fathead knew he had seen him somewhere, and couldn't place him. Now he's placed him, that's all."

"There's one thing you've overlooked, Smithy," said Mark Linley, in his quiet way.

"Give it a name," said the Bunder carelessly.

"We've all heard Wharton speak of the square-jawed man. Steele's got a rather square jaw—we know that. But whether Bunter knows the man or not, Wharton knows him like a book. If Steele's the man, Wharton would have known it the first day of term."

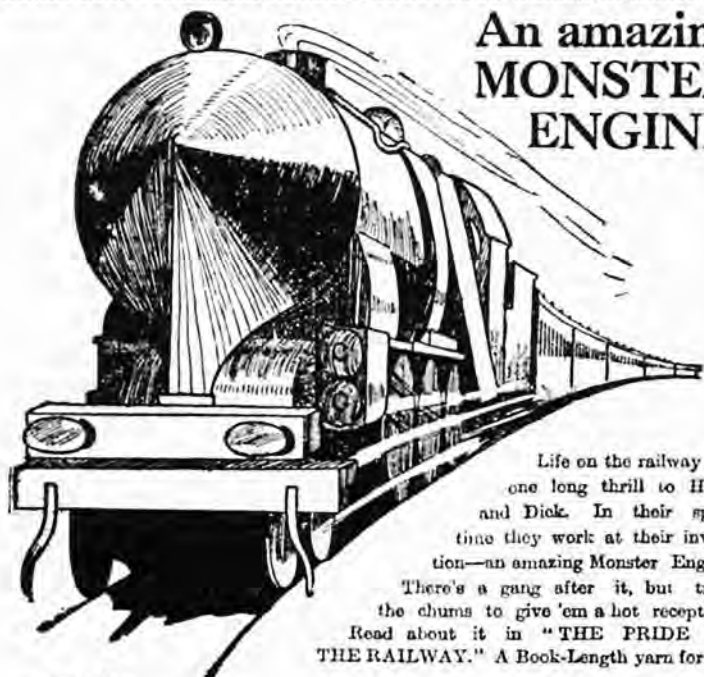
The Bunder laughed.

"That's a winner," he agreed; "and the answer is he did know him, and kept it dark."

"Why should he?"

"I don't know—I only know he did." "You think Wharton would keep it dark if he knew that Steele was a man

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hiding from the police!" exclaimed Bob Cherry warmly.

"He may not have felt so certain about it as Bunter does! He's not such a tattling ass as Bunter, anyhow. He knows jolly well that Steele is the man he saw at Hogben Grange; but, finding him a Public school Form master, he mayn't think he's the burglar. He may think the man had some other reason for clambering over park walls at midnight—healthy exercise, you know—an unusual form of physical jerks, or somethin'—"

Some of the juniors laughed. "That man they saw at Hogben Grange was the burglar, right enough," said Hazeldene. "Wharton was sure of it last term. He saw him, when he was home for the Christmas holidays, hanging about some place in Surrey that had been burgled, too."

"That's so," said Bob. "Sankey Hall near Wharton Lodge was burgled, and a lot of stuff taken; and Wharton saw the man there afterwards—"

"Only it wasn't Steele," said Nugent. "Couldn't have been."

The Bouncer laughed sarcastically.

"Why doesn't Wharton say so, then?" he queried. "He knows we'd all take his word, and laugh at Bunter's yarn if he sat on it. Why doesn't he?"

"Blessed if I know!" growled Bob. "We'll jolly well ask him flat—Anybody know where he is?"

"Where's Bunter, too?" grinned the Bouncer.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Lots! My idea is that Wharton's cornered Bunter somewhere, and is trying to shut him up."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Why should he?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"My dear man, I don't know all Wharton's reasons," yawned the Bouncer. "He may have changed his opinion that the man with the square jaw was the jolly old crackman—and so he mayn't want this yarn to spread round Steele. It's clear that he wants to keep it dark, or he'd have given Steele away the first day of term."

"Rubbish!"

"Rot!"

"Well, let's have our jolly old Form captain on the carpet, and question him," said the Bouncer. "I'll give any man ten to one in doughnuts that he doesn't deny Bunter's story!"

Nobody accepted the odds. But there was a general movement to go in search of Wharton. The captain of the Remove was not to be seen in the quad; neither was Billy Bunter.

"He's in the House," said Bob. "Come on!"

And almost every man in the Remove streamed after Bob Cherry, to hear what Wharton had to say—if anything—and to get the tip, as the Bouncer expressed it, straight from the horse's mouth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Yes, or No!

"YOU fat villain!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You puffing, tattling chatterbox!"

"I say, old fellow—"

"You—you—you—" Harry Wharton paused. Really, there seemed no adequate word for Bunter.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. The two juniors were in the Rag—deserted, as was usual at that time of the day.

"Look here old fellow—"

"You fat, frabjous, fozzling freak!"

"You made me come here!" Bunter's voice rose indignantly. "I thought it

was a feed, or something, when you asked me to come here. If you've got me here to call me names—"

"You—you pernicious porpoise—"

"Beast! Wasting a fellow's time—in

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

In this weekly feature our versatile rhymester gives you pen portraits of the leading lights at Greyfriars.

This week: FRANK NUGENT.



WHEN Wharton first to Greyfriars came, And things looked none too happy, He met a fellow, Frank by name, A very decent chappie.

These two became, without delay, Great pals, beyond the ordinary, And they are still, right to this day, Which really is extraordinary.

Frank Nugent is a handsome lad. In fact, he's almost pretty; "A 'y' to lad you simply add," Said someone, sharply witty, But though his looks are rather sweet, Our Frank is not a dandy; He never fails to find his feet, And proves himself quite "handy."

At cricket and at footer, too, He's full of bold defiance; Though hardly up to it, is true, The standard of the giants. In all the matches you will see Him waiting, keen and ready; There's better chaps, and worse, than he, But Nugent's sure and steady.

Which shows, that of the Famous Five, Our Frank is not the beacon; But he is very much alive When lesser chappies weaken. An all-round sportsman, Nugent plays As straight a game as any; And this, indeed, is higher praise Than we can give to many.

Our noble Frank, I'll have you know, Has other splendid qualities; He'll help you in a time of woe, Or join in all frivolities. He has an ever-ready hand Stretched out for friendly giving; Affectionate and generous, and, What's more, he's quite forgiving.

Let's yell and yell until we're hoarse With rising jocularity, To praise the Famous Five, of course, And swell their popularity. And while our voices boom away, Let one and all remember, Frank Nugent is, in every way, A really worthy member!

break!" said Bunter. "Mean to say you haven't any tuck—"

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Not even any toffee!"

Bunter snorted. He felt that he had been inveigled into the Rag under false pretences. He made a movement towards the door.

"Hold on, you fat fooler—"

"Shan't!"

"Stop, you idiot!"

"Look here, is it a feed?" roared Bunter.

"No, you gormandising gorgon—"

"Then I'm not wasting any more time. The fact is, I've got something to tell the fellows—"

"Hold on, I tell you! If you say another word about Steele, I'll burst you all over Greyfriars!" said Wharton savagely. "I warned you not to spread that yarn about him; and you agreed not to tattle—"

"If you think I'm the fellow to tattle, Wharton—" began William George Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"What do you call it, then, you fat ass? You've spread the yarn all over the Remove."

"Nothing of the sort! I may have told a few friends, in confidence, of course. I may tell a few more. I—"

"By Jove! I've a jolly good mind—"

The captain of the Remove made a stride towards the fat junior.

"Yarooogh!"

Bunter bolted for the door. He did no stop to ask Wharton what he had a "jolly good mind" to do; he could guess.

Bunter's motions, as a rule, were not swift. But circumstances alter cases.

With an angry face and an uplifted boot behind him Billy Bunter could put on speed.

He shot through the doorway like a fat rabbit shooting into its burrow.

Crash! Bump!

"Whoop!"

"Oh, my hat! Ow!"

"Here he is!"

"Bag him!"

"Here's Wharton—"

"Here's both of 'em!" chuckled the Bouncer. "What did I tell you?"

The Remove fellows had arrived, looking for Wharton and Bunter. The Owl of the Remove crashed into them as they reached the door of the Rag. Bunter rolled on the floor, and Bob Cherry and two or three other fellows staggered right and left.

"Yarooogh! I say, you fellows—wow! Ow!"

"Bring him in," said Skinner.

"Ow! Leggo!"

Three or four fellows grasped Bunter, and propelled him back into the Rag. The whole crowd followed.

Harry Wharton met them with a clouded brow and troubled eyes. He could guess why they wanted to see him. He had been with Bunter that night at Hogben Grange, and naturally the fellows wanted to know his version. He had eluded the matter so far, but it was not to be eluded now.

What line he was to take he did not know. Satisfied himself after long and troubling doubts, of Steele's bona fides, he had intended to remain silent on the subject. He did not understand the mysterious circumstances that surrounded the new master, but once he was satisfied that Steele was "straight" he was willing to dismiss those puzzling circumstances as no business of his.

Then came Bunter's revelations, complicating the situation. Keeping silent now was not of much use. Silence was

only confirmation of Bunter's allegations; while it was, of course, impossible to deny what was true. The captain of the Remove felt himself in a very unenviable position.

The trouble in his looks did not escape the curious Removites. They exchanged significant glances, and the sarcastic grin intensified on the Bouncer's face. "It's true, and Wharton knows it is," remarked Skinner. "His jolly old chivvy gives him away."

"Look here, Wharton—" said Bob. "Well!" snapped the captain of the Remove, more sharply than he was wont to speak to a chum. He was feeling worried and troubled.

"Don't bite a man's head off, old scout," said Bob cheerfully. "Bunter says—"

"Blow Bunter!"

"Blow him as hard as you like," agreed Bob, "but he says—"

"Oh, bless Bunter!"

"My esteemed chum," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "the English proverb declares that the speechfulness is silvery, while the silence is a bird in the bush; but on the present occasion the heart-to-heart talkfulness is the proper caper."

"Good old Inky!" chuckled Bob. "Now, then, old bean, make a clean breast of it. Bunter says—"

"Oh, kick Bunter."

"Certainly. Anything to oblige. Shove Bunter this way, you men."

"Oh, really. Cherry—"

"Look here, I'm fed up with Bunter and his gas," said Harry Wharton restively. "Give us a rest."

"You jolly well know—" bawled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Bunter says—"

"Blow what Bunter says!"

"You won't get an answer out of Wharton," said the Bouncer, with a chuckle. "Wharton's standing up for Steele."

Wharton gave Smithy an angry look. The Bouncer gave him a provoking grin in return.

"No good scowling at me, old scout," he said amicably. "I never brought up Steele in the burglary line."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter says," resumed Bob Cherry, undeterred. "Bunter says that he recognised Steele yesterday as the man you saw at Hogben Grange the night of the burglary there. He says you know him to be the man too. I suppose you can answer yes or no to a plain question."

"I suppose I can," grunted Wharton.

"Well, is Steele the man?"

It was a plain question, and the buzz in the crowd died away as the juniors listened eagerly for the answer.

No answer came. Harry Wharton stood silent.

"Is Steele the man you saw climbing the wall of Hogben Grange on the night of the burglary?" demanded Skinner categorically. "Is he the johnny you've described as the man with the square jaw?"

No reply.

"Forgotten how to speak?" asked Snoop satirically.

"The dear man's gone dumb!" said Skinner.

Wharton flushed angrily.

"Look here, I don't want to jaw about it," he said. "Bunter's a tattling silly ass, and you're all silly asses to take any notice of him."

"Thanks!" said Bob rather drily.

"The thankfulness is terrific, my absurd chum!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That isn't an answer, Wharton," said Tom Brown. "Why the merry thump can't you say yes or no?"

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Wharton opened his lips and closed them again. The New Zealand junior laughed.

"Silence gives consent," he remarked.

"Look here, Brown—" said Tom Brown.

"My dear chap," said Tom Brown, "can't you see that if you don't answer it's the same as if you answered yes?"

Wharton could see that quite clearly. But he could not answer no; and he would not answer yes. He remained silent.

"Nothing to say, old bean?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Nothing!"

"Better have this out, Harry," said Bob Cherry very quietly. "If you don't say plainly that Bunter is gammoning, it can only be because you can't say so. Everybody will believe him."

"I can't help that."

"I say, you fellows, I hope you haven't doubted my word—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"I tell you Steele's the man, and Wharton knows—"

"Cheese it!"

"Beast!"

"Still nothing to say, Wharton?"

asked the Bouncer.

"Nothing!"

"That tears it, then, I think."

TELL A TALE AND WIN A POCKET KNIFE

like Duncan Mitchell, of 5, North Shore Street, Campbelltown, N.B., who has sent in the following joke:

A READY RETORT!

A gentleman visiting a country mansion thought he would play a prank on the groom. Pointing to two huge dogs carved from granite at the entrance to the estate, he asked:

"How often do you feed those dogs?"

"As soon as ever they bark!" was the straightforward reply.

If Duncan can do it, so can you. Pile in with your efforts now, chums!

"What-ho!" chuckled Skinner. There was the clang of a bell. It interrupted the exciting scene in the Rag. It was the bell for third school.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the jolly old tinkler!" said Bob. "Come on. Mustn't be late even if our Form master is a giddy cracksmen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites streamed out of the Rag. Harry Wharton followed them very slowly.

He had not answered the questions put to him; but as Tom Brown had said, silence gave consent. When the Removites gathered in the Form-room for third lesson, every man in the Form knew that Wharton, as well as Bunter, had recognised Steele as the mysterious man with the square jaw.

Whether that man was the notorious Courtfield cracksmen or not, might be still a question, but there was no doubt that Richard Steele the new master of the Remove, was the man who had climbed the park wall of Hogben Grange on the night of the burglary at Sir Julius Hogben's house.

That, in the way of evidence, was more than enough for most fellows. It had been enough for Wharton himself, until he had come to know Steele and respect him and like him.

There were fellows in the Remove who neither liked nor respected Steele, and still more who were indifferent to him. These fellows were not long in making up their minds.

Probably nine-tenths of the Form, as they sat in third school, sat there convinced that the master who was taking them through Latin irregular verbs was the secret cracksmen whose robberies had alarmed the whole neighbourhood for months past. Which was absolutely thrilling for the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars; and certainly had a rather deteriorating effect on the discipline of the Form.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Asks For It!

RICHARD STEELE looked over his Form.

He had been puzzled that morning already; but in third school he was more puzzled than ever. The excitement in the Form, so far from having died down during break, had intensified. Fellows in the Form watched him like cats; and continually exchanged significant looks.

In some of them there were further developments. The Bouncer's sarcastic look was more marked. Skinner was sporting an impertinent grin on his rather unprepossessing face. There was a faint, but unmistakable, lack of respect in many of the Removites. Bolsover major, spoken to, did not answer; spoken to a second time, he answered carelessly, and forgot to add "sir" to his answer.

Hazeldene and Skinner conversed in whispers, and went on whispering after Steele's eyes fell on them, taking no notice of his look. Not till he commanded silence did they cease to talk; and then they exchanged a grin.

The Bouncer was noticed, after a time, fumbling in his pockets. Steele spoke to him at last:

"Do not be so restive, Vernon-Smith."

"Sorry, sir!" said the Bouncer, with silky politeness. "I'm looking for a key."

"Never mind your key now, Vernon-Smith."

"But I shall want it after class, sir."

The steely grey eyes fixed on Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"What do you mean Vernon-Smith?" asked Steele. "Is this intended for impertinence?"

"Certainly not, sir! I only want to lock my desk before I leave the Form-room, sir. Luckily, there's a lock on it."

Steele, perplexed by that answer, fell into the trap.

"I fail to understand you, Vernon-Smith. Why do you desire to lock your desk after class? You keep no valuables in the Form-room, I suppose?"

"Well, a fellow can't be too careful, sir!" said the Bouncer.

"Careful of what?" snapped Steele.

"Burglars, sir!" said the Bouncer coolly.

The Form listened breathlessly. Only the Bouncer, probably, in all the Remove, would have had the "nerve" to rag the suspected master like this. But the Bouncer had nerve enough for anything.

"Burglars!" repeated Steele blankly.

"Yes, sir! Being new here, sir, you may not have heard of the burglaries that have happened in this quarter," said the Bouncer gravely. "Last term, sir, there were quite a lot; and there's been one this term, too. The papers are full of the Courtfield cracksmen, as they call him, sir. He butted into this

"Bend over that desk, Vernon-Smith!" ordered the new Form master. "I am going to cane you for insolence!"
The Bounder hesitated.



school one night before we broke up for Christmas, sir."

"I have read the papers," said Steele. "But you do not mean to imply that you are foolish enough to suppose that a burglar might visit a schoolboy's desk in a Form-room?"

"You never can tell, sir, when he's near at hand," said Vernon-Smith.

"Near at hand!" repeated Steele.

"Yes, sir."

"You cannot mean that you know anything of the whereabouts of the Courtfield burglar, Vernon-Smith?" exclaimed the Form master, in astonishment.

The Form listened breathlessly for the Bounder's answer. They half expected him to come right out into the open. But even the Bounder's nerve was not quite equal to that.

"Well, sir, he's known to be living secretly somewhere in this neighbourhood," said Smithy. "That's what the papers say, at least. I've heard, sir, that he's a man with grey eyes—"

"What?"

"And a very square chin, sir," said the Bounder.

Steele gazed at him in silence. It was impossible to doubt the implication in the Bounder's words. A faint flush crept into the new master's face. Latin irregular verbs seemed to be forgotten, both by the Form and the Form master. For a second a pin might have been heard to drop in the Form-room.

Steele's glance passed from the Bounder to Wharton.

It lingered only a moment on the captain of the Remove; but it caused a crimson flush to spread over Harry's face. The contempt in it stung him to the quick.

He opened his lips, but closed them again. Steele knew now—knew what

was in the minds of his Form; he knew what had caused the excitement in the Remove that morning. And he had taken it for granted that Wharton had tattled. Wharton, so far as he knew, was the only fellow in the Remove who was aware that he was the man of Hogben Grange.

But it was impossible for Harry to exculpate himself in the presence of the whole Form; and he sat uncomfortably silent.

The Bounder was smiling sweetly. This scene was sheer enjoyment to Smithy. He had no particular dislike for Steele; except that the Bounder was "up against" all in authority, on principle. But of all the staff at Greyfriars, probably he respected Steele most. But the temptation to "rag" the man, to show off his nerve and effrontery before a breathless Form, was too strong for the Bounder. That he was taking risks only added to his enjoyment.

Besides, if the man was a rascal, why shouldn't he rag him? That was an excuse, if Smithy wanted one.

As a matter of fact, he wanted none. He was ragging Steele purely for the excitement of it and for the admiration of the other fellows, who would never have dared.

"Quite an uncommon man, sir, by all accounts," said the Bounder. "He's been seen by fellows in this school—his description's known. In fact, sir, he's not really unlike yourself to look at."

"Vernon-Smith!" Steele's voice was very quiet; but there was a note in it that would have warned a less reckless fellow than the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"No offence, sir," said Vernon Smith, with an open mockery of respect. "I mean, there's a general resemblance, from the description. Of course, sir,

nobody could suspect a Form master in a school of being anything but what he seemed, sir."

This was going very far; and the juniors marvelled at the Bounder's nerve. Their wonder was like wine to the Bounder.

But, in point of fact, Smithy had gone a little too far. Steele, who had a look in his hand, laid it down on his desk and picked up a cane.

"Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. If the man was going to cane him—

He was!

"I can only consider, Vernon-Smith, that your remarks are intended for impertinence—I should say, insolence!" said Steele. "Step out before the class."

"Don't go, Smithy!" whispered Skinner.

The Bounder gave his adviser a rather black look. It was easy enough for Skinner to say "Don't go!" but in Smithy's place, Skinner would have gone fast enough.

Slowly the Bounder obeyed the master's order. All eyes were on him as he stood out before the Remove.

"Bend over that desk, Vernon-Smith!"

"What for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you for insolence!"

The Bounder breathed hard.

"May I ask, sir, how I have been insolent?" he inquired. "It was quite unintentional, if—"

"That statement is untrue, Vernon Smith. It is not the first time you have spoken untruthfully in this Form-room! Bend over!"

"It's only fair to tell me, sir, how

"I've offended," said the Bouncer resolutely. "I was speaking of the Court-field crackman, sir; and any fellow in the Form will tell you that the description is like you, sir—"

"No description is known of the criminal to whom you allude, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, yes, sir! Two fellows in this Form saw him one night—the night he burgled Hogben Grange."

There was a gasp from the Remove. The Bouncer, with punishment hanging over him, had come fairly out with it.

"That will do, Vernon-Smith! Bend over that desk immediately!" rapped out Steele.

"But, sir—"
"Do you desire me to take you to your headmaster, Vernon-Smith?"

"I don't mind, sir!"
"Well, I shall not trouble Dr. Locke with your folly," said Steele. "I shall deal with the matter here and now!"

His left hand dropped on the Bouncer's shoulder. With a strength that made the Bouncer, wiry as he was, feel like an infant in his grasp, the new master twisted him over the desk. Then the cane rose and fell.

Vernon-Smith wriggled in the grasp of the master. If he was struggling to release himself, his struggles had no effect; the grasp on him was like a steel vice. And the cane lashed hard.

The Remove looked on breathlessly.

Smithy had asked for it—begged for it, in fact. No master in any school could have tolerated the Bouncer's impudence. Steele, in fact, had shown himself strangely patient and forbearing. That, of course, was regarding him as a Form master. Regarding him as a skulking criminal, he had no right to resent Smithy's words—no right to be at Greyfriars at all. But whatever he might be, he was acting as a Form master, who was sure of his ground and had no doubt of his authority. And by the time six lashes had fallen, the Bouncer had cause to regret that he had ventured to treat him as anything else.

Vernon-Smith uttered no cry as the lashes fell; but his face grew whiter, and his eyes fairly burned.

The new master of the Remove released him at last.

There was no anger in his face; only a quiet and indomitable determination—the look of a man who intended to exercise the authority that was in his hands, and to enforce obedience to it.

"You may go to your place, Vernon-Smith." His voice was quiet. "I am sorry—very sorry—that I have had to punish you; but you left me no choice. Go to your place."

For a moment the Bouncer stood, panting, facing him, his eyes ablaze. A torrent of indignant defiance was evidently on the Bouncer's tongue. But the quiet, steady eyes daunted him, reckless as he was; and he went to his place without a word.

Many glances were cast at Smith as he sat down—some of them grinning. The Bouncer scowled. If anything was calculated to make him seethe with fury, it was his humiliation before the Form.

Steele took no heed of him for the remainder of the lesson. The Bouncer gave no further offence. He shifted uncomfortably on his seat; and his eyes dwelt incessantly on the new master, gleaming. The Bouncer had recklessly plunged into that trouble; but he had not "got away" with it; and he could not forgive his defeat. In the Lower Fourth the new master, whatever he was, had made one bitter enemy.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In Doubt!

HARRY WHARTON remained behind in the Form-room when the Remove were dismissed.

Steele, sitting at his desk, the desk that had been Quelch's, did not seem to notice him.

He busied himself with papers, apparently unconscious that anyone was in the Form-room with him.

Wharton hesitated to speak. But the Form master did not look up; and Harry approached his desk at last.

"May I speak to you, sir?"

Steele looked up at that. His clear grey eyes, very cold in their expression now, read the junior's flushed face.

"On a matter appertaining to the Form do you mean?" he asked.

"No sir; another matter."

"I think not, then," said Steele icily. "I have had reason to change my opinion of you, Wharton. I am disappointed."

"But, sir—"

"That is all!" The new master made a gesture towards the door, and bent over his papers again.

Wharton's flush deepened, and an angry gleam came into his eyes. He was not to be dismissed like this.

"I'm bound to speak, sir!" he said quietly.

"What do you mean?" rapped Steele sharply.

"You know, now, sir, what the fellows have been discussing—"

"Naturally; Vernon-Smith made it clear to me," said Steele contemptuously. "After giving me your word on the subject, you have tattled an absurd story to your Form-fellows, which will probably remain a topic among the boys for days, if not for weeks. It is extremely awkward and uncomfortable for me."

"Yes; but—"

"I went to the length of satisfying you on the subject, in order that this foolish story should not spread through the school. It appears to have been useless; you could not keep your foolish tongue still."

Steele had shown no anger towards Smithy, who had glibbed at him, and whom he had punished. But there was anger in his face now.

But Wharton was angry, too; and he did not heed the new master's gesture towards the door, made a second time.

"You're quite mistaken, sir," he said coldly.

"Nonsense! You say yourself that the matter is now the talk of the Form. I was perplexed this morning; but I understand now. You have told the boys what you saw at Hogben Grange one night last term—a matter that did not concern you, and which you know perfectly well was better left unmentioned."

"I have told them nothing."

Steele started a little.

"Nothing?"

"Mr. Quelch would not have doubted my word, sir," said Harry. "Still, he knew me better than you do."

"If you have said nothing, how is it that the story is known to the whole Form?"

Wharton's lip curled.

"It is not my business to tell you that, sir," he answered. "I'm bound to tell you that I have said nothing; because I could see that you believed I had. I have no more to say than that."

"You have told no one?" asked Steele, puzzled.

"No one."

The set face of the master softened a little.

"Perhaps you have told some friend, some intimate friend in confidence, and he has been indiscreet," he remarked.

"Perhaps I should not blame you too much for that."

"I have told no one at all."

"Then how is the story known?"

Wharton did not answer.

It was not for him to give away the tattler of the Remove. Steele could find that out for himself if he wanted to know.

Steele's brow darkened again.

"You have no explanation to give of that?" he snapped.

"It is not my business to explain it!" said Wharton coolly. "It is only my business to explain that I have not tattled as you believed I had. That is all I have to say."

"That is scarcely enough," said Steele.

"I haven't anything more to add to it, sir!" said Harry, and he made a step towards the door.

"Stop!"

Wharton stopped.

"Since the matter has been mentioned, it had better be cleared up beyond doubt," said the new master coldly. "Last term you saw me, on a certain occasion, in unusual circumstances. Only you and Bunter were present then; and Bunter either did not see me clearly, or had forgotten, as he has said nothing on the subject. I have not failed to observe Bunter's character; and know perfectly well that had he been aware that I was the man at Hogben Grange, he would have spread the story on the first day of term. He did not."

Wharton made no rejoinder.

"You are the only person, therefore, who could have started this unpleasant talk," said Steele. "In order that such an absurd story should not be discussed here, I went to the length of making an explanation to you, and referred you to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield. I understood that Mr. Grimes had satisfied you that the man you saw that night—myself—was not a law-breaker."

"Quite, sir."

"And, after all, I find that the story is the talk of the Form!" snapped Steele. "You are quite aware that this will be troublesome to me, though you do not know all the trouble it may cause. You tell me that you did not start this talk?"

"I did not."

"Then who did?"

No answer.

"You have nothing to say, Wharton?"

"Only what I've said, sir."

"Very well," said Steele. "You may go."

Harry Wharton left the Form-room. His face was flushed, and there was a gleam of anger in his eyes.

His chums were waiting for him in the corridor.

"Trouble with the beak, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry, as the five went down the passage together.

"He's put this tattler down to me!" said Harry bitterly. "It hasn't occurred to him that Bunter didn't remember him at first, and remembered him later. So I get the credit for it."

"But you've told him—"

"He doesn't take my word."

"You didn't mention Bunter—"

"How could I, fathead?"

"Of course, you couldn't! Steele ought to have taken your word," said Bob. "My hat! I wonder—"

He whistled.

(Continued on page 12.)

"Old Ref." wags his chin!

INSIDE INFORMATION!



By
The "OLD
REF."

In this snappy feature "Old Ref." disposes of many knotty problems that, at first sight, perplex the soccer enthusiast. Fire your questions in to him TO-DAY!

ONE of the things which has pleased me about this feature which I like to think of as our football school is the attention which is being paid by my "scholars." Questions are now being fired at me from week to week. Some of these I answer direct, but those which raise questions of what may be considered general interest, I reply to in this column as quickly as possible.

There is one from K. V., who lives at Hyde, Cheshire, which raises an interesting point. He says that in a recent local match the outside-right took a corner-kick. There was a wind blowing, and to allow for the wind which would make the ball curl into the goal, the wing man sent it slightly behind the line. The wind brought it back into play; a goal was scored, and the referee allowed it to count. Should he have done so?

The referee should not have allowed a goal to be counted in such circumstances, provided the facts have been correctly stated.

If the ball went over the line as it came through the air towards the goal, then it was out of play and a goal kick to the defending side should have been granted immediately.

The rule says quite distinctly that a ball is out of play when it has either crossed the goal-line or the touch-line either on the ground or in the air. The last clause in the quoted rule is the one which governs the point raised by my Hyde correspondent.

The ball is not out of play when most of it is over the line; it is not out of play until the whole of it has passed over.

As a full-sized football is twenty-seven inches or so in circumference, it follows that the part of the leather which is touching the ground, say, has to be several inches over the line ere the whole of the ball can be said to be over.

Reverting to the point about the swerving corner-kick, I may add to my reply, given above, that a lot of clear thinkers about this game of football are of opinion that in regard to this rule of the game might be altered to advantage. Some think—and I am inclined to agree with them—that the rules should be revised and made to read that the ball should not be out of play until it touches the ground outside the line. When there is a strong wind blowing, a clever player, taking a corner-kick, could make use of the wind by sending the ball out of play in such a way that it would swerve inwards before reaching the goal area—that is, before coming to the ground. The present rule seems to put a handicap against clever play.

THE burst ball question is raised again by a correspondent, R. W. L., from Fulham. He was the goalkeeper in a minor League match, and his side were ahead by two goals to one when the opposing centre-forward hit a first-time shot towards him. As the centre-forward kicked the ball, it burst, and the wind was obviously—according to my correspondent—whistling out of it as the ball passed him on its way to the net. The referee allowed a goal, and I gather that the match was not won by my correspondent's side, but ended in a draw.

If that was so, my Fulham boys' team was unlucky.

A goal cannot be scored with a burst ball.

I have explained this in a previous article, and it still remains true. If, in the opinion of the referee, the ball bursts before it passes over the goal-line, then a goal should not be allowed. If the ball bursts when it strikes the back of the net, or one of the supporting posts, then a goal should be allowed, because in such circumstances the goal has not actually been scored with a burst ball.

THE question of substitutes for injured players has again cropped up, and several readers have written to me as to whether it is in order, when a side loses a player through injury, for a substitute to be allowed to take his place. This is a question over which, generally speaking, the authorities have been very determined. They have held that it would be a dangerous practice to allow substitutes to take the place of men so badly injured that they cannot continue to play, and these authorities have discouraged the use of substitutes in all classes of football.

In this connection, however, I ought to add that on at least one memorable occasion the authorities departed from their consistent refusal to admit the principle of substitutes for injured players. Probably you don't remember the Wales v. England International match of 1908, because that was rather a long time ago.

In that game, however, a fine custodian, named Dick Roose—one of those who gave his all in the Great War—was keeping goal for Wales.

During the first half of the match he was badly hurt, and it was found at the interval that it would be suicidal for him to continue the game during the second half.

As it happened, another fine goalkeeper, who was qualified to play for Wales—Dai Davis, of Bolton Wanderers—was on the ground. The English authorities said Wales could put him in goal for the second half if they wished to do so, and the Welsh people availed themselves of the offer, and Wales had a substitute for an injured player.

I have never heard, by the way, whether Dai Davis, having played in half an International match, was given half a cap. But he was certainly half an International.

That incident, however, was not allowed to be considered as a precedent. This was shown in an International match between Ireland and England at Belfast about three years ago. In the first half of that game, Ted Hufton, who was keeping goal for England, fractured two bones in his arm, and he could not go on to play after the interval. But there was no substitute allowed to England for the injured goalkeeper. They had to play through the second half with ten men, and one of the forwards, John Ball, went into goal.

Ball told me that it was the first time he had ever kept goal in any sort of match, and that when the ball came to him he kept forgetting that he was allowed to use his hands to it. My own view of this sort of thing is that, while there may be good reasons for refusing to allow substitutes for injured players in general, I think a substitute should always be allowed for a goalkeeper who is badly hurt.

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WANTED BY THE POLICE!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Well, what?" asked Harry.

"I wonder if Smithy and Skinner are right. It doesn't seem possible, but—but—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" said Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

"What was he doing that night at Hogben Grange, I'd like to know?" said Johnny Bull. "That wants a lot of explaining."

"It does," said Nugent.

Wharton was uncomfortably silent. He had given his word to say nothing on the matter, if Mr. Grimes answered for Steele, and the Courtfield inspector had answered for him. That satisfied Wharton that Steele was not the crackman, whatever might be the reason for his strange and suspicious actions. Steele doubted his word; but his word still held good.

"Look here! What do you think yourself, Harry?" asked Johnny Bull bluntly.

"I think—I'm sure—that there's nothing in the story," said Harry. "I've got reason to believe that."

"But he's the man you saw that night?"

No answer.

"Look here! Why can't you speak out?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Saying nothing is the same as saying 'yes.' I don't see what you want to be so jolly secretive and mysterious about."

"I don't mean to be secretive. But—but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing! Let it drop."

Johnny Bull grunted expressively. "I can tell you this much," said Harry. "Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, knows Steele well, and trusts him. Never mind how he came to tell me so, but he did. That shows that Steele is above board."

"I don't see that it does," answered Johnny. "If he's cunning enough to bamboozle the Head and the governors, he's cunning enough to bamboozle a fat-headed rural policeman!"

Wharton started.

"What rot!" he said uneasily.

"I don't call it rot! Whoever that crackman is, he's a downy bird—and he beats the police all along the line. Grimey may be having his leg pulled."

"I—I can't think so."

Let it drop, and come and punt a ball about before dinner," said Bob Cherry, and the juniors went out of the house into the wintry sunshine.

Wharton felt himself sorely troubled in mind.

He had liked Steele, and respected him, and that had helped him to take the man on trust. But that talk in the Form-room had wounded him deeply, and he could not help resenting it. Johnny Bull's suggestion had come at a moment when there was fruitful soil in Wharton's mind for it to fall upon. He found that his old doubts of the man were reviving, and once more he was asking himself the question, was Richard Steele the Courtfield crackman?

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Taking Any!

"I'm not going!"

It was half past five.

That was the hour appointed for Billy Bunter to repair to his Form master's study for some much-needed instruction in the matter of English history.

Bunter might have taken the view

that it was kind of Steele to give up an hour of his leisure to increase the scanty stores of Bunter's knowledge. But Bunter did not take that view.

Bunter had no desire whatever to see an increase in his store of knowledge. He did not, perhaps, hate history with the deadly animosity he felt for mathematics and Latin. Still, he loathed it. The glories—and otherwise—of the past had no interest whatever for Bunter.

There had been altogether too many kings and queens, in Bunter's opinion; he was not interested in them, or in anything or anybody who had preceded William George Bunter in the land that was now so happy as to possess him.

Indeed, it might have been supposed that Billy Bunter regarded history, in the proper sense of the word, as beginning with the birth of W. G. Bunter. Geography, properly speaking, should have been confined to the area where W. G. Bunter lived and moved and had his being. Arithmetic was superfluous, except in so far as it was useful to Bunter in counting his change at the tuckshop. Grammar was merely rot, and Latin grammar particularly troublesome rot.

But though Bunter's powerful brain had evolved these original views on educational matters, he had no hope that such asses as Form masters would ever see eye to eye with him.

But at the very least, Bunter considered, a Form master ought to confine his activities to the Form-room. Giving an extra toot was, Bunter considered, rather like hitting below the belt.

No doubt his Form master took the view that Bunter was not likely to pass an exam in his present state of abysmal ignorance. But Bunter was quite content to fail in exams, so that was all right.

"I'm not going!" Bunter repeated to the fellows in the Rag. "It's like the beast's cheek to pick on me. Making out that a fellow doesn't know his history!"

It was one of Bunter's peculiarities that, while he grovelled contentedly in the deepest depths of ignorance, and resented any attempt to drag him therefrom, he also took the view that he was the cleverest and best-informed fellow in the Remove.

It was not logical; but it was Bunter!

"I fancy I could teach him some things!" said Bunter, blinking round through his big spectacles. "I knew a lot of things Quelch never knew, and this man ain't up to Quelch's mark. Like his cheek to think he's going to drive me. I won't be driven!"

"Fathead!" said Peter Todd. "It's time you buttoned in on Steele. Go and butt!"

"Shan't!" said Bunter.

"You'll get licked," warned Peter. "Form masters have to be given their head—even when they find fault with perfect characters and prodigies of learning like our Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't look on him as a Form master," said Bunter. "He's a blinking burglar, and he ought to be booted out of Greyfriars. Fact is, I don't care to trust myself in his study."

"Afraid he'll burgle your gold watch?" asked Skinner sympathetically. "Don't worry, old fat man. If he's a burglar, he knows rolled gold when he sees it—so he won't seize it when he knows it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I'm not going! Suppose—suppose he knows that a fellow knows who he is, he might shoot a fellow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Well, suppose he's got an automatic, I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I jolly well shan't go!" roared Bunter. "And if he comes after me, I'll go to the Head! I'm not going to be bullied by a burglar!"

Whether Bunter considered that his fat person would be safe in the Form master's study or not, there was no doubt that he was eager to jump at any excuse to dodge that extra hour of tuition.

"After all, now a fellow knows who he is, a fellow is bound to tell the Head," said Bunter. "He's a burglar—the same man who tried to burgle this very school last term! If the Head knew that, would he let him stay? What?"

"Hardly!" grinned Skinner.

"Well, somebody ought to tell the Head!"

"You tell him, old fat bean," suggested Hazeldene.

"Well, he might think it bunkum—"

"He jolly well might!" grinned Bob Cherry, and Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the mightfulness was terrific.

"If he thought it bunkum he would just lick me and—there you are!" said Bunter. "I don't want that! I object to that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'll tell you what," said Bunter eagerly. "Wharton knows, and Wharton's captain of the Form. Wharton ought to go to the Head about it. It's up to Wharton! I say, Harry, old chap, will you go to the Head and—denounce the second?"

"Thanks; no."

"If you get a licking it will be in a good cause," urged Bunter. "It's your duty, you know. After all, duty's duty! Remember what Oliver Cromwell signalled at the battle of Bunker's Hill: England expects every man to do his duty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only hat! I fancy Bunter wants that extra toot!" chuckled Toddy. "But I don't envy Steele giving it to him."

"Make it Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar, fatty!" chortled Bob.

"Rot! You don't know much about history, Bob Cherry. If it wasn't Oliver Cromwell it was Sir Francis Drake. Look here, you'd better go and have that extra hour—tell Steele you need it more than I do."

"I cannot tell a lie!" chuckled Bob.

"To come back to the subject, Wharton, will you go to the Head and denounce that—that snake in sheep's clothing—that wolf in the grass?" asked Bunter. "It's your duty! Besides, it will save me from extra toot! Think of that."

"Fathead!"

"Well, I'm not going," said Bunter obstinately. "I'm not sure that my life would be safe in that desperado's study, and I refuse to work out of school hours. Prep's had enough without extra toot chuckled in. If the beast comes after me tell him I've gone to Courtfield to fetch the police. That will very likely frighten him away from Greyfriars altogether, and we shall be shut of him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove men.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the Rag. It was a quarter to six now, and quite likely that Steele would look for him if he did not turn up in Master's passage.

"You fat ass, go to Steele's study!" shouted Toddy after him.

"Shan't!"

And Bunter disappeared.

Five minutes later the clear-cut face

"If only we could give Bunter the tip that Steele is after his blood——" Skinner stepped suddenly as the fat junior, goggling in terror, emerged into view.



and keen grey eyes of Richard Steele looked in at the doorway of the Rag. He glanced over the juniors there, who fell suddenly silent as he appeared. Steele, probably, did not need telling what had been the topic before his arrival.

"Is Bunter here?" he asked.
"No, sir!" said Harry, answering as head boy of the Form.

"He should have come to my study," said Steele. "Do you know where he is, Wharton?"

"No, sir."

The juniors looked at one another. Bunter had left a message for Steele, and the fellows were wondering whether there was any man present with nerve enough to repeat it to the Form-master. There was!

"He left a message for you, sir," said Vernon-Smith.

Steele raised his eyebrows.
"Bunter left a message for me?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir."

"I do not quite understand. What message did he leave?"

Some of the fellows gave Smithy warning looks. Others grinned in anticipation. The old Bounder was the man to stand up to this wolf in sheep's clothing, Skinner whispered to Stott.

"Am I to give you his message, sir?" asked the Bounder.

"I have told you to do so."

"I mean, sir, you will not call it impertinence or insolence if I do!" inquired Smithy. "I've had rather a severe lesson on that subject to-day, sir, so I'm sure you will excuse me for being careful."

Steele's eyes fixed on the Bounder.
"Tell me immediately what message Bunter left!"

"He said he was going to fetch the police, sir," said the Bounder hardily.
"What?"

"The police, sir."

There was a dead silence in the Rag. Even the iron-nerved Bounder quailed a little under the steady, daunting stare of the grey eyes.

"And for what reason, Vernon-Smith,

did Bunter make that utterly absurd statement?" asked Steele quietly.

"He thought it would very likely frighten you away from Greyfriars, sir," answered the Bounder, with cool hardihood.

There was another silence.

The Remove men hardly breathed as they watched Steele. What they expected of him they hardly knew; but certainly an outburst of some sort. The Bounder, who had asked for it in morning school, was asking for it still more emphatically now. Even Smithy himself felt an inward quail, though he did not allow it to show on his face.

To the amazement of the juniors the stern face of the Form-master relaxed into a smile. He laughed.

"The absurd boy!" he said. "Is it possible that even Bunter, the stupidest boy in the Form, is so absurd as to believe that childish story spread by a mischievous tattler. How ridiculous!" He laughed again.

"Well, well, one must be patient with an obtuse boy," he said. "Some of you find Bunter, and tell him that he is excused to-day, and that he shall have his extra hour on Wednesday afternoon, when I am more at leisure."

And with that, and a smile lingering on his face, Richard Steele walked out of the Rag, leaving the Removes looking at one another blankly. The Bounder bit his lip. He had risked severe punishment in order to gibe at the suspected master, but his gibe had fallen harmless.

"Plenty of nerve, that merchant!" remarked Skinner, when Steele was gone.
"He would have if he's a giddy crackman!" remarked Snoop.

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry. "If there was anything in it he wouldn't laugh it off like that. He took it as a joke—and it is a joke—nothing more! And he's a jolly good-tempered sportsman to take it like that!"

"It's bluff!" said the Bounder.

"Rot, old bean! You're still feeling the six you got in the Form-room this morning," grinned Bob. "You'd be ready to believe old Wingate a crackman if he gave you six."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh rats!" growled the Bounder, and he turned angrily away.

Whatever the Bounder might think, or choose to think, there was no doubt that Steele's way of taking it had made a good impression on the Remove. He had treated Bunter's absurdity good-naturedly, and certainly had betrayed no sign of alarm at the mention of the police. Yet, if there was "anything in it" he had ample grounds for alarm, for it was certain that what was now known to all the Remove would not be long in spreading farther. If he was a man playing a part, with a guilty secret to keep, safety now lay in flight—in prompt flight. Obviously, however, Richard Steele had no intention of leaving Greyfriars, and he was not alarmed.

"There's nothing in it," said Bob. "It's queer—jolly queer—but there's nothing in it, my infants. Steele's all right!"

"The queerfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the nothingfulness in it is preposterous."

"Nerve!" said Skinner. "He's brayening it out, of course."

"Sure of that, Skinner?" chuckled Bob.

"Quite."

"Then why not phone the police and put them on to him?"

"Rats!" said Skinner, and turned away.

Evidently Skinner had no idea of taking that drastic step, which looked as if Skinner, after all, had his doubts as to whether there was anything in it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Stuffing Bunter!

SKINNER grinned.
He had gone up to his study. No. 11 in the Remove, and turned on the light.

The first thing that impressed itself on his attention when the light was on

(Continued on page 16)

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CLEVERCOVE'S WHEELZE!

By DICKY NUGENT



Oh, jemimy! Ever seen a cake walk? No! Well, pop into St. Sam's this week; cakes not only walk, they disappear!

"YOW-OH!"
"Grooooooo!"
Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's were eggspressing their feelings as they came out of the Head's study.

The Head had been indulging in his favorite hobby of wheeling the merry birch.

Needless to say, Jack Jolly & Co. had shown indomitable curridge. Apart from yelling feendishly all the time, they had borne their whackings with unflinching fortitude. But now that it was over they natchurally showed signs of wear and tear.

"Ow! I'm hurt!" groaned Jack Jolly, as he led the diurnal procession back to the Fourth Form quarters.

"Same here!" groaned the rest, in chorus.

"What beats me," said Merry, "is how the old buffer found out that we were the fellows who fixed up that oooby-trap."

Jack Jolly laughed grimly.

"There's nothing surprising in that when you come to think of it. I should say he's been prowling around in a state of invisibility again."

"Of course! I remember now hearing a loud roar of larfter behind us when we were fixing the trap!" remarked Bright.

"Well, never mind!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Let's forget our troubles in a feed. I've laid in a good stock of grub in the study. Coming?"

"Yes, rather!" corussed the rest of the Co. And they followed their leader, looking a bit more cheery.

An astonishing and unpresidented state of affairs had arisen at St. Sam's since the beginning of the new term.

Clevercove was responsible. Clevercove was the inventor of the Fourth. He was always bringing out some

braney new idea, and his latest was the brainiest of the lot. Breeffy, it was a device for making people invisible. It was a grato idea, and while it belonged to the Fourth it provided lots of larfter and innocent amusement.

It was when the Head stepped in and collared the outfit that trubble began. Dr. Birchmall, like the cunning old fox he was, had promptly started using the apparatus for his own benefit. Unseen by hewman eyes, he had sneaked about the school, nocking fellows' heads together, aiming sly kicks at all and sundry, and listening-in to private and confidential talks. The result was that by this time everybody at St. Sam's, from the masters down, had got into a state of pannick.

No longer was it possibul to eggspress a frank opinion about Dr. Birchmall. The chances were that the Head himself was standing by listening all the time! Our heroes' latest eggsprience was merely the last of a long chain of similar instances.

Feeling a little more bucked at the prospect of a tuck-in, Jack Jolly & Co. trotted into their study in the Fourth passage.

"By Jove! I feel I can do with a snack!" remarked Frank Fearless.

"Then you shall have it!" grinned Jack Jolly. "What about this for a feed?"

So saying, the kaptin of the Fourth threw open the cupboard door.

The rest of the Co. looked and then fairly blinked.

"Why, there's nothing there!" eggsc-laimed Frank Fearless.

"What?"

"It's as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard!" roared Bright.

Jack Jolly looked himself, then fell back in sheer amazement.

"My hat!" he cried. "You're right. Some villain has pinched our tuck!"

At that moment the door opened to

admit the Honnerable Guy de Vere, the aristocrat of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" he drawled. "Seen anythin' of my tuck hampah? It's missin'!"

"Grate pip! So is our grub!"

"Awfully annoyin'. I got it from my patah only this mornin'," said De Vere languidly. "I wondah where it can be?"

"Jolly here?" inquired a voice at the door, before anyone could suggest an answer to that question. "Ah, there you are! Look here, Jolly, I've come to inquire about a duzzen doennuts that some rotter has boned from my study."

All eyes were turned to the door. Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, was standing there nitting his brows and biting his lips, as he usually did when he wanted to eggspress annoyance.

"Mean to say you've lost your grub, too, sir?" asked Jack Jolly. "Then we're all in the same boat, for our tuck has vannedish, too."

"My hat! Then the scoundrell, whoever he is, has been in a regular orgy of looting!" eggsc-laimed Mr. Lickham. "I wonder if that fat Form-fellow of yours, Tubby Barrell, has been at work?"

"It never occurred to me, but it certainly looks like it!" remarked Jack Jolly. "We'll see Tubby at once!"

Mr. Lickham nodded grimly and led the way to Tubby Barrell's study.

The rest followed, their eyes gleaming. If the prize porker of the Fourth was the culprit he was in for trouble with a capital "T."

Crash!

It was Mr. Lickham's heavy, hob-nailed boot catching the panel of the door a fearful clump that sent it flying open immediately.

Master and boys entered the study. As they did so a cry of rage burst from Mr. Lickham's lips. Seated at the table with a fat grin on his fizz was Tubby

Barrell; and before him stood a bag of doennuts which Tubby was polishing off as if for a wager!

"Well of a' the nerve—" gasped Frank Fearless.

"My doennuts!" came a sobbing cry from the master of the Fourth. "Thank Heaven there are still some left! As to you, Barrell—"

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Tubby Barrell, looking rather alarmed.

"I will no' waste words on a tuck-pincher!" cried Mr. Lickham scornfully.

"Instead, I will see that you get the punishment you so richly deserve. Bump him, boys!"

"What-ho!" cried Jack Jolly & Co.

"Bump! Bang! Crash! Wallop! Boom!"

Again and again, with deflating crashes, Tubby Barrell's anatomy collided with the floor. Only when Jack Jolly & Co. were thoroughly tired did they desist.

"Let that be a lesson to you, Barrell!" said Mr. Lickham sternly, as Tubby picked himself up, roaring with pain.

"Yarooooo! I didn't need a lesson!" roared Tubby Barrell. "I don't know what it's all about. I ain't a tuck-sneaker!"

"Tell that to the maroons!" retorted Mr. Lickham. "You jolly well pinched my doennuts, anyway!"

"I didn't!"

"Eh?"

"I didn't pinch any blessed doennuts!"

"Then what are these?" asked Mr. Lickham, pointing to the bag on the table.

"I've just bought them at the tuck-shop. Dame Grubbe can prove it!" howled Tubby Barrell.

Mr. Lickham looked a trifle abashed. "Honest Injun?" he asked.

"Of course!"

"And you didn't take my grub?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Certainly not!"

"Bai Jovel! Nor my tuck-hampah?" inquired the Honorable Guy de Vere.

"No; bust you!"

"In that case we owe you an apology for having acted hastily, Barrell!" said Mr. Lickham, with a sly grin. "Help yourself to one of your own doennuts and forget all about it, my boy!"

"Take more than a doennut to blot out the recklerlection of that bumping!" snorted Tubby Barrell. "If you'd only waited I could have told you who took your tuck!"

"You could?" said Mr. Lickham eagerly. "Who was it, then?"

Tubby Barrell looked round nervously and dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Dr. Birchmall!" he answered at last.

"The—the Head?" gasped Mr. Lickham. "What evidence have you to offer in support of such an amazing accusation, Barrell?"

"The evidence of my own peepers!" replied the fat junior. "Coming along from the tuckshop just now I spotted a tuck-hamper sailing across the Hall on its own."

The juniors looked at each other meaningly.

"My hat!" eggshaimed Jack Jolly. "Why ever didn't we think of it before? What you mean, of corse, Tubby is—"

"I mean that the Head had made himself invisible again and started raiding the House for tuck!" said Tubby.

Mr. Lickham started violently.

"Oh, grate pip! The—the awful villain!" he muttered. "Come, boys! This matter requires immediate investigation, and I'm jolly well going to investigate it!"

And Mr. Lickham russed out of the study, followed again by his pupils.

They cantered along to the main staircase, then rushed downstairs towards Dr. Birchmall's study.

As they drew near that dreaded sanktum, there was a sudden cry from Jack Jolly.

"Grate pip!" he gasped. "Look!"

The rest looked, and what they saw made them fairly blink.

II

GLIDING away from them towards the Head's study was a large fruit cake. It was a ripping cake to look at; but that was not what attracted the juniors' attention. What made them rub their eyes with astonishment was the way it was careering along in mid air without any visible means of support.

Mr. Lickham drew a deep breath.

"Well, this takes the cake!" he mormered. "It gave me quite a start for a moment. Of course, I know now, that although we can't see him, the Head is carrying it."



"Yaroooo! Yow-ow!" yelled Mr. Lickham as Dr. Birchmall's birch fairly bit into his shoulders.

"Eggsactly!" nodded Jack Jolly. "If you want proof, there it is!"

And Jack pointed to the Head's study. As the juniors looked they saw the door open and the cake disappear into the study.

"That settles it!" remarked the master of the Fourth. "We know now, without a shadow of doubt, that the guilty party is Dr. Birchmall."

"But what can we do about it?" asked Bright. "We can't go and accuse the Head of tuck-raiding!"

"Can't we?" growled Mr. Lickham.

"I'm going to do it, anyway, and chance what happens. Coming along, boys!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then follow me!"

So saying, Mr. Lickham strode up to the Head's study, which he flung open without troubling about a preliminary rap.

Dr. Birchmall was visible again now. He looked up with a start from a desk that was piled high with tuck-hampers, pies, and cakes. Then he frowned as he reckermised the newcomers.

"Mite a bloke ask you to tap on his door before you enter, Lickham?" he asked, with elaborate politeness.

The master of the Fourth glared.

"You may, if you wish, sir," he answered hastily. "But I mite say that

I haven't come here to stand on ceremony."

"Then sit down!" grunted the Head. "What are all you boys here for? Is it a giddy deputation?"

"No, sir," answered Jerk Jolly boldly.

"We've come for our tuck!"

"And I've come for my doennuts!" growled Mr. Lickham. "Where are they?"

Dr. Birchmall grinned.

"Sorry, old sport! I ate them long ago! Oblige me by buzzing off, all of you, will you? I want to make myself invisible again and go out on another tuck-raiding eggspedition!"

"You—you—you berglar!" stuttered Mr. Lickham.

"Eh?"

"You tuck-pinching villain!" booted the indignant master of the Fourth.

"You grub-raiding outsider!"

Dr. Birchmall jumped.

"Are you speaking to me?" he asked in astonishment.

"I jolly well am!"

"Grate pip! You—a meer assistant master?" gasped the Head. "Why, I'll pulverise you! I'll slawter you! Come here, bust you!"

With these words, Dr. Birchmall seized a handy birchrod and made a rush at his disrespectful subordinate.

Mr. Lickham jumped back too late, with the result that the Head's birch caught him a fearful swipe across the shoulders. That swipe was followed by a rain of others as the Head waded in.

"Yarooooo! Ow-wow!" yelled Mr. Lickham. "I won't say—yooooo!—anything more—grooooo!—about it, if only you'll lemme go—yow-ow!"

"Right ho, then! It's a bargain!" grunted Dr. Birchmall, flinging aside the birchrod at last.

"Now buzz off—or, to put it in vulgar parlance, you may go! Lemme see, I believe you juniors have got fifty thousand lines each to write for me?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then consider those impots dabbled!"

Leaving them unforchunt, Form master to stagger away to his own quarters, groaning, Jack Jolly and his chums returned to the Fourth passilgo and held a solum conference in Clevercove's study.

"Something must be did!" said Jack Jolly firmly. "Now that the Head can make himself invisible he's a worse tyrant than ever, and I don't see why we should put up with it."

"Hear, hear!"

"The puzzle is, what to do. Anybody got a wheeze?"

"I have!"

All eyes turned on Clevercove.

"Well, trot it out, then, old scout!" said Jack Jolly.

Clevercove did so.

"My wheeze is simply this," he said. "We'll wait till the Head is out on some invisible tuck-raiding eggspedition, then we'll drop into his study and collar the electric chair."

"My hat! But then the Head will remain invisible!"

"Eggsactly!" grinned Clevercove. "That's the idea!"

"But—but we shall be worse off than ever, then!" eggshaimed Frank Fearless.

Clevercove shook his head.

"I don't think so, old chap. You see the grate attraction to the Head at present is that he can become visible again when he likes. Once he found that he could no longer change back he'd get into a fearful state of funk."

"That's true!" nodded Jack Jolly.

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(Continued from page 13.)

in the study, was a foot that projected from behind the armchair.

The armchair had been shifted into a corner of the study screening that corner, and obviously someone had taken cover behind it. Equally obviously, it was Bunter.

Squatted in the corner behind the big chair Bunter lay doggo—rather in the manner of the ostrich who buries his head in the sand, leaving the rest of him in full view of the hunter. Bunter's foot, a fat ankle, and a length of trouser-leg, remained to reveal Bunter's presence to anyone who entered the study.

Harold Skinner turned to Snoop, who was following him in, and put his finger on his lips.

Snoop stared.

Skinner pointed to the fraction of Bunter that was visible in the screened corner.

Snoop grinned.

The foot was seen to stir. Bunter evidently had shifted uncomfortably as he heard footsteps in the room. But it was not withdrawn from sight; Bunter did not know that it was in sight.

Skinner and Snoop grinned at one another. Bunter had apparently gone into hiding, in case Steele should look for him. Perhaps he hoped that the message he had left for Steele would be delivered, and would have the desired effect of frightening him away from Greyfriars.

With deep astuteness, Bunter had not gone to his own study. He had retired to another fellow's study; and dodged out of sight—as he supposed—at the sound of footsteps.

This was too good an opportunity for a humorist like Skinner to lose.

Snoop's idea was to pick up the heaviest volume in the study and drop it suddenly over the back of the armchair—on Bunter! Certainly that would have surprised Bunter.

But Skinner knew a trick worth two of that, or three or four. He signed emphatically to Sidney James Snoop to be silent. Snoop, rather puzzled, waited to take his cue from Skinner.

"Awful, ain't it?" said Skinner.

Snoop blinked.

"Ph? Oh! Yes," he said.

"I mean, that man Steele getting after Bunter with an automatic—"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Snoop.

"Did you see the pistol?" asked Skinner. "He was trying to hide it under his coat-tails; but I saw it all right."

There was a gasp of affright from behind the armchair. The two juniors affected not to hear it.

"I—I saw it!" stammered Snoop. "Oh! Yes! Loaded, I think!" He had taken his cue, and was entering into the game.

"You can bet it was loaded!" said Skinner. "The Courtfield crackman wouldn't be likely to have his automatic unloaded, would he? It's plain now that Steele is the crackman. What would a Fern master be doing with a

loaded pistol? He's the crackman, all right; and, of course, he's got it in for Bunter. My impression is that he intended to blow Bunter's brains out if he got him to his study for extra foot!"

"Oh! Yes! Of—of course, that was his game!" gasped Snoop. "Plain as anything!"

"Bunter knows him, you see," said Skinner. "Bunter could bring the police down on him! Dead men tell no tales, you know."

There was another horrified gasp in the corner. Snoop manfully suppressed his emotion as he heard it. He was tempted to burst into a roar of laughter that would quite have spoiled Skinner's joke.

"Now he's after him," resumed Skinner. "What's become of Bunter I can't imagine. You got any idea where he is, Snoopy?"

"Can't think," said Snoop.

"Hiding somewhere, I suppose," said Skinner. "If I knew where he was I'd warn him—it would be only friendly. All he can do now is to get out of the school, and bolt, before Steele gets him. Steele's idea, of course, is to silence him. If we could find Bunter and give him the tip, he'd have a chance of getting away and claiming police protection."

"Oh, my hat! I mean, that's his last chance!" gasped Snoop. "He—he could get away to Courtfield—"

"And bung into the police-station," said Skinner. "I fancy that's the only way to save his life now. Steele's after his blood!"

"Oh lor!"

"Was that a sound?" asked Skinner, glancing round.

A fat face, with little round eyes goggling in terror behind a big pair of glasses, emerged into view from behind the armchair.

"Bunter!" said Skinner, with dramatic astonishment.

"Bunter here!" ejaculated Snoop.

"Shut the door quick, Snoopy! Quick!"

Sidney James Snoop shut the study door.

"I—I—I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Don't speak too loud," said Skinner. "Steele may come up to the Remove passage any minute, and if he hears your voice—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm afraid you're in danger, Bunter," said Skinner, with owl-like seriousness. "I had my suspicions in the Form-room, when Steele told you to come alone to his study. Had you, Snoopy?"

"I had!" said Snoop.

"The—the awful villain!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if—if he comes along here, tell him I'm not here, won't you? T-t-tell him I—I've gone to the police!"

"You can't stay here, Bunter," said Skinner decidedly. "Bullets are no respecters of persons, and we might get it instead of you when Steele starts in with his automatic—"

"Ow!"

"You can't expect it, Bunter," said Snoop. "After all, it was you who gave the man away. He's got it in for you, and you can't expect to draw other fellows into it."

"Cut, old man!" said Skinner. "Get out of the house before he lands on you. That's your only chance. Look here, we'll help you all we can. We'll see if the coast's clear for you to bolt."

"I—I say, you fellows, c-c-can't you hide me, and—telephone for the police?" gasped Bunter.

"And get shot by that crackman?" said Skinner. "No, thanks! We're

keeping clear of this! But we'll do all we can for you. Steele's rooting about downstairs for you now. Wait here while I see whether the coast's clear, and then we'll help you out by the box-room window, if you like."

"I—I say, what about going to the Head?" gasped Bunter. "The Head's bound to protect a fellow!"

"What could he do against an armed crackman?" asked Skinner. "Besides, if you go downstairs you may run into Steele at the first step."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Wait here, and keep quiet!" said Skinner.

He went out into the Remove passage. He returned in a couple of minutes, with a startled face.

Bunter blinked at him in terror.

"Is—is—is he coming?" he stammered.

"I've just heard his voice down the stairs," said Skinner. "He's inquiring after you."

"Oh lor!"

"I suppose he's going to search these studies. Of course, he may not find you. If he does, though, I wouldn't give much for your life!"

"Ow!"

"There's time to cut along to the box-room and get out. If he asks us anything we won't say a word."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter rolled to the door. He blinked back at Skinner and Snoop in anguish; and the two young rascals, with a great effort, kept their faces serious.

"Hurry!" breathed Skinner.

"Quick!" said Snoop.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"I think I can hear him—"

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter bolted out of the study and rushed along to the box-room stairs. He bolted into the box-room like a fat rabbit into a burrow.

Skinner followed him. Snoop did not. Sidney James Snoop felt that he could not stand the strain any longer, and he remained in the study, rocking with laughter. Only Billy Bunter was capable of believing that a crackman with an automatic was hunting him through the school; but when Bunter's terrors were aroused, he was prepared to believe anything.

"Quick!" breathed Skinner, opening the box-room window. "I can hear his footsteps—"

"Oh dear!"

Bunter scrambled out of the box-room window to the leads beneath.

"I—I say, Skinner—"

Skinner shut down the window and fastened it. He was done with Billy Bunter now. The terrified Owl of the Remove crawled away, dropped from the leads, and scuttled away in the darkness like a frightened rabbit.

Skinner returned to his study.

"What—" began Snoop.

"He's gone."

"Out of the House?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Snoop.

"D-d-do you think even that fat idiot is idiot enough to go to the police station?"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"My belief is that he's idiot enough for anything," he answered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop wiped his eyes.

"There'll be a row if he's missed from the House, after lock-up," he said.

"That's Bunter's affair," yawned Skinner. "If he breaks House bounds after lock-up, I suppose he knows what he's about."

"But—but suppose he went to the police, and—and came back with a bobby!" gasped Snoop.

"All the better!" said Skinner coolly. "If that man Steele is a crackman the sooner he sees a bobby the better."

"But is he?" asked Snoop, very dubiously.

"Blessed if I know, or care much, either. I know the beast has caned me nearly every day since he came here, and that's enough for me. I'm going to make it as unpleasant for him as I can—and this will spread the yarn all over Greyfriars, if it doesn't get as far as the police station."

"My hat! Fancy the Head's face—if a bobby came back with Bunter."

Skinner chuckled.

"Fancy!" he agreed.

There was a tap at the door of the study a few minutes later, and Harry Wharton looked in.

"Seen Bunter?" he asked.

"Bunter?" said Skinner reflectively. "Yes, I think I've seen him. Want him?"

"Only to tell him what Steele said. The fat duffer still thinks he's got to go to Steele's study for extra toot."

"He won't go there anyhow," chuckled Snoop.

Wharton glanced curiously at the two. He could see that something was on in Study No. 11.

"Well, where is he?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Blessed if I know!" drawled Skinner. "I fancy he thinks that Steele is after him—"

"What rot!"

"With an automatic—"

"With a what?" gasped Wharton.

"An automatic! I fancy he's bolted out of the House."

"Great pip! Have you been pulling Bunter's leg?" demanded Wharton. Skinner looked grieved.

"Do I ever pull anybody's leg?" he asked. "Am I capable of it, my dear school-fellow? Don't you know me better than that, my young friend?"

"Oh, rats!" was Wharton's reply; and he walked away, leaving Skinner and Snoop chortling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Any Port In a Storm I

"O H eriker!" gasped Billy Bunter.

It was yet early in the evening; but in January it was dark very early, and the quadrangle was black as Bunter barged away towards the school gates.

The gates at that hour were locked; and Gosling was likely to want a lot of persuading before he opened them to let a Lower Fourth junior out.

It was extremely improbable that Billy Bunter would have found egress at the gates had he reached them.

But he did not reach them.

In the darkness the glowing end of a cigarette caught his eyes, and stopped him just before he barged into a figure on the path.

His startled exclamation reached the ears of the shadowy person behind the cigarette, and his voice was evidently recognised, for a voice that Bunter knew at once rapped:

"Is that Bunter? What are you doing out of the House?"

It was Steele.

That Steele was walking in the quad, meditatively smoking a cigarette and thinking of his own affairs, did not occur to Bunter. That unexpected meeting bore out only too well the warning Skinner had given him. Bunter had no doubt that the villain had missed him from the House, and was hunting him in the quad.

He did not answer. With a gasp of affright, he turned away and bolted into the darkness.

"Bunter!" called out Steele.

"Oh lor!" came back a terrified gasp. That was all the reply he had from Billy Bunter. The fat Owl vanished into the night.

"Bunter!"

Steele made a few strides in pursuit. But the Owl of the Remove was gone, and the puzzled master resumed his cigarette and his stroll.

Bunter was running for his life.

With his terrified imagination now working at full pressure, Bunter expected every moment to hear the bark of an automatic behind him.

Deeply did the fat Owl repent himself of having "given Steele away." Wharton had warned him to keep silent about the mysterious man of Hogben Grange; and Bunter had fully intended to do so, only the inordinate length of his tongue had been too much for him. Now the villain was after him with an automatic—according to Skinner—on the principle that dead men tell no tales. Bunter realised that he had asked for it; but he did not want what he had asked for; very much indeed he did not want it.

He fled wildly.

The gleam of light from a window over the garage came like a beacon of hope to him.

He dared not go near the gates. There was a certain spot in the old Cloisters where the wall could be negotiated; but Bunter dared not venture into the dark and lonely Cloisters with that awful villain after him. Barnes would let him out. Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, was really under some obligations to Bunter; at least, in Bunter's opinion. Barnes would let him out of the garage gates on the road, and he would be safe.

Gasping for breath, Bunter reached the garage.

He stopped there, to pump in breath, blink round through his spectacles, and listen for sounds of pursuit. He could hear nothing. But in the January gloom the villain might be at hand, for all that. Bunter pictured him creeping through the darkness—

He lifted his fat hand to knock, to call Barnes' attention, but remembered in time that a knock might call the attention of anyone else within hearing. So he did not knock.

He groped on the door.

Barnes had a door opening on a little hall, and a staircase that led up to the rooms he occupied over the garage. That was the door at which Bunter had stopped. It was not likely to be locked at that early hour, and Bunter found that it opened to his touch.

He opened the door, stepped into darkness within, and closed the door behind him—softly.

He listened again; but if there was any sound of pursuit the closed door shut it off.

Bunter breathed more freely.

He groped silently across to the little staircase that led upward. With stealthy caution, he crept up step by step. He dared not call to Barnes, lest his voice should reach the ears of the desperado who was seeking him.

The top of the stair gave on a little landing, from which Barnes' sitting-room opened, a bed-room being beyond. From under the door of the room came a glimmer of light.

Barnes, evidently, was there.

Bunter, as he paused and listened, could hear some faint sound of movements in the room.

Clink! It was a sound of metal touching metal. Bunter might have been curious, at any other time, to know what Barnes was up to; but he was too terrified now to be even inquisitive. He groped for the handle of the door, turned it, and pushed.

But it did not open. It was locked on the inside.

A startled voice came from within.

"What—Who is there?"

Bunter, frightened as he was by the imaginary pursuer on his trail, could not help wondering why Barnes had his sitting-room door locked. He heard a sound of a drawer hurriedly closed, and of a key that turned. Then swift footsteps approached the door from within.

But the door did not open. Barnes' voice came again, more calmly:

"Who is there?"

"Me!" gasped Bunter. "Me, Billy Bunter!"

He heard Barnes draw a deep breath on the other side of the door.

"Master Bunter! What do you want?"

"Let me in, Barnes! Let me out!"

"What?"

Probably Barnes was surprised. Bunter's request certainly sounded a little mixed.

"Barnes! Let me in! I want you to let me out! Quick! He's after me."

The door did not open, however.

"You must not come here playing practical jokes, Master Bunter," said the voice from within, perfectly calm now. "Go away at once."

"It ain't a joke!" gasped Bunter.

"I'm in danger! Fearful danger! I want you to let me out of the garage gate, see?"

"Nonsense."

"Look here, Barnes—"

"Go away at once," said Barnes, "or I shall complain to your Form master of your disturbing me in my quarters."

"He ain't a Form-master—he's a burglar—"

"WHAT?"

"He's after me!" gasped Bunter. He was trying to find the keyhole, to speak through it to Barnes, but there was no glimmer of light from the keyhole. Something hanging on the inner side of the door covered it.

"What do you mean?" came Barnes' voice again. "Who is a burglar? Are you mad?"

"That man Steele—"

"Steele?"

"Our new Form master! He's a burglar—he's the Courtfield crackman that's been in all the papers—"

"What?" gasped Barnes.

"I've found him out, and he's after me with a revolver—"

"You young idiot."

"Oh, really, Barnes—"

"Go away at once, you young sweep!"

"Let me in, you beast! Let me out, you rotter! Look here, Barnes, if you don't let me in, and let me out, I'll jolly well tell the Head about you taking his car out on a joy-ride that night at Wharton Lodge—the night of the burglary at Sankey Hall—"

Bunter rattled the door-handle. He was getting desperate now. If the villain had tracked him to the garage he might come up the dark stairs behind him at any moment!

"Let me in, you beast! I only want you to let me out at the gate, so that I can go to the police—"

"The police?"

"And bring them here—"

"Bring them here?" gasped Barnes.

"Yes; to collar the Courtfield crackman. I say, Barnes, he's going to shoot me! He's got an automatic! What have you got your door locked

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for, you beast? What are you up to? Let me in, Barnes! I—I believe he's just behind me."

Bunter's voice rose to a howl. The door opened and a flood of light fell from the lighted room. Bunter bolted in, so suddenly that he collided with Barnes and sent that young man staggering.

"Shut the door!" he gasped. "Lock it! I—I believe I heard him on the stairs! Keep him off! Help!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Handed Over!

BARNES stood staring at Billy Bunter.

There was surprise in his face, and anger, too; but something more than that it would be hard to define. Barnes' rather good-looking face was generally almost as expressionless as that of a wooden image. But it was far from expressionless now.

Bunter had succeeded in disturbing the equanimity of the Head's quiet and impassive chauffeur.

The gleaming of Barnes' eyes startled Bunter as he blinked at him. It occurred to him that their might be a fierce temper behind that well-conducted young man's cool self-control.

"You young fool!" said Barnes. He had given a swift glance across the landing to the stairs, and ascertained that no one was following Bunter. "You idiotic little fool!"

"Oh, really, Barnes—" gasped Bunter.

"Tell me what you mean by coming here like this." There was a note of menace in Barnes' voice. "More than once you have butted in where you were not wanted. What does this mean? Speak, you babbling, fat fool!"

Bunter blinked at him, amazed. He almost forgot to be frightened in his astonishment at this change in Barnes' manner.

Never had that excellent and respectful chauffeur forgotten till now his respected manner towards a Greyfriars man. Even when Bunter had butted into his room at Wharton Lodge, one night in the Christmas holidays, during the Head's visit there, Barnes had hardly for a moment lost his silky civility.

Now it seemed to have dropped from him like a cloak. Barnes was startled and disturbed—it might have been supposed that he was alarmed now. His voice, usually quiet and well-modulated, rasped, and there was a threat in both voice and look.

"Do you hear me?" Barnes made a step towards the Owl of the Remove, and Bunter jumped back in alarm. "What do you mean by this?"

"I—I've told you!" gasped Bunter. "That villain is after me—"

"No one is after you," said Barnes. "Sure!" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, you frightened fool."

"Look here, Barnes, you just mind how you talk!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Just remember your position here! You'll jolly well get the sack if you talk to a Greyfriars man like that!"

"I've seen this man Steele that you speak of," Barnes eyes were fixed on Bunter's fat face. "A new master here, a believe."

"Yes!" gasped Bunter. "Master of the Remove—my Form—"

"What do you mean by calling him a crackman?"

"He—he is, you know! He's the man who burgled Hogben Grange, and—and Sankie Hall in the holidays. Wharton knows."

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"Wharton?" ejaculated Barnes.

"Yes. I've told all the fellows—I mean, I've mentioned it to a few friends, and it's out—and now he's after me with an automatic—"

"After you with an automatic!" repeated Barnes almost dazedly. "In the school?"

"Yes!" panted Bunter.

"You born idiot!"

"Oh, really, Barnes—"

"What put it into your fool head that your Form master has any connection with the Courtfield crackman?"

"He—he's the man, you know. I—I want to go to the police. I'm going to bring them here. They can handle him. He was seen hanging about the places, you know, where the burglaries took place. We know he's the man. He's after me. Skinner saw his pistol, and told me—"

"Oh! Some practical joker has been pulling your leg," said Barnes, as if he understood at last.

"I tell you I'm going to the police. You let me out by the garage gate, see! I'm coming back with a babby!" gasped Bunter. "They'll be jolly glad to get news that the Courtfield crackman is skulking at Greyfriars, and I'm going to tell them so."

Barnes started.

"You are going to tell them that at the police station—if you get there?"

"Yes, rather! It's true."

Barnes' look was strange as he gazed at the fat junior. But the angry menace died out of his face.

Like a mask that is resumed the smooth impassivity returned to his face, the deferential respect to his manner.

"I am afraid you have been deceived, Master Bunter, by a practical joker," he said. "Your headmaster would be very angry if you went to the police station with such a story."

"Not when he knew it was true—"

Barnes smiled faintly.

"It is some absurd mistake, or a joke," he said. "Certainly I cannot let you out of the school after lock-up; it is as much as my place is worth. You had better go back to the House at once."

"I—I daren't!" gasped Bunter.

"Nonsense," said Barnes. "As you have come into my rooms, Master Bunter, I will take you back."

"I won't go!" roared Bunter in alarm.

"I think you will!" said Barnes quietly.

He took hold of Bunter's fat arm. Barnes was rather a slim young man, but his grip was like steel.

"Come!" he said.

"I—I won't!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo! I say, that villain's hunting for me this minute! We may run into him. Leggo!"

"This way," said Barnes quietly.

Bunter had to go, with that grip on his arm. Barnes led him down the dusky staircase, and out of the building.

"Oh, you beast!" gasped Bunter, wriggling wildly in the grasp of the Head's chauffeur. "I tell you I won't go! I'm not going to be murdered just to please you—"

Barnes led him onward regardless. "I won't go!" howled Bunter.

But though Billy Bunter stated that he would not go, he went—wriggling and struggling, but he went.

Barnes led him back to the House, inexorably. There was no doubt that Dr. Locke would have been greatly disturbed and annoyed had Bunter reached the police-station at Courtfield with so extraordinary a statement to make concerning a Greyfriars master. Perhaps Barnes desired to spare his employer that annoyance. At all events, he obviously intended to take

care that Bunter did not get to Courtfield.

So far from letting him out of the school by way of the garage, he was leading him back to the House, to hand him over to his Form master—like a sheep to the slaughter.

The door stood open, the light streaming out into the dusky quad. Richard Steele stood in the doorway, looking out. He was speaking to Wingate of the Sixth.

"A Remove boy is out of the House, Wingate." His voice came to Barnes and Bunter as they approached. "I came on him—Bunter of the Remove."

"Shall I look for him, sir?" asked the prefect.

"I think he had better be looked for," said the Remove master. "He ran away when I called to him, and—"

He broke off, as two figures came into the light from the doorway.

"Here he is, sir," said Wingate. "Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "I won't go in—Yow-ow!"

"What on earth's the matter with the kid?" exclaimed Wingate, in astonishment.

Barnes propelled the fat junior into the doorway. There he released him.

"I thought I had better bring this boy back, sir," he said, touching his hat to Mr. Steele. "He came to the garage and asked me to let him out of the school—"

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Steele.

"He seems to have been frightened by some practical joker, sir," said Barnes. "It seemed to me best to bring him back to the House."

"Quite right, Barnes," said the Remove master. "Thank you very much!"

"Not at all, sir."

And Barnes touched his hat again, and faded away into the gloom.

Steele turned to Bunter.

"Now, Bunter, what— Goodness gracious! Stop him, Wingate!"

Bunter dodged desperately.

Escape from the House was cut off by the master and the prefect. Bunter ran for the Head's study.

"Wingate made a jump after him—too late. Bunter flew."

"Bunter! Stop!" shouted Mr. Steele.

"Is the kid potty?" gasped Wingate, amazed.

"Extremely stupid, at all events," said Steele, and he hurried after the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter ran for his life. He reached the door of the Head's study well ahead of the Form master. He did not stop to knock at the door. Awe of the headmaster was completely forgotten in his dread of the Form master behind him. He burst the door open and rushed blindly in, and Richard Steele reached the doorway behind him, in time to see the grave and reverend Head of Greyfriars jump to his feet with a startled exclamation.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Head!

BLESS my soul!" Dr. Locke stared at Bunter as if unable to believe his eyes. "What—what—what—"

he ejaculated.

"Save me!" yelled Bunter.

"What—what?"

"Keep him off!"

"What—what?" exclaimed the bewildered Head. "What is the matter? Keep whom off? What do you mean?"

"Ow! Help! He's after me!" shrieked Bunter, as the athletic figure of the Remove master appeared in the doorway.

"Bunter—Mr. Steele! What—what does—?" The Head stared from one to the other like a man in a dream. Steele stepped quietly into the study. Bunter bolted past the Head's writing-table, and took refuge behind the majestic figure of Dr. Locke.

"Keep him off!" he roared. "Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "Mr. Steele, what is the matter? Why is this boy frightened? What—what has happened?"

"Nothing, sir, except that this boy appears to be incredibly stupid," said the new master of the Remove. "Someone has been frightening him with a ridiculous story, and he appears to be hysterical."

"I ain't!" yelled Bunter. "Don't you believe him, sir! He's a cracksm—man—he's got an automatic—"

"A—a—a cracksm—!" gasped the Head. "Mr. Steele a cracksm—! What do you mean by a cracksm—?"

"A—a—a burglar, sir!" "A burglar!" said the Head dazedly. "Mr. Steele a burglar! Are you out of your senses, Bunter?"

"Keep him off! He's got an automatic! Skinner saw him hiding it under his coat-tails when he was looking for me—"

"You utterly absurd boy!" exclaimed the Head.

The expression of deep annoyance on Mr. Steele's face broke into a smile. Probably the idea of anyone hunting Bunter up and down Greyfriars with an automatic pistol, hidden under his coat-tails appealed to his sense of humour.

"Mr. Steele," gasped the Head, "as you are new here, and perhaps not yet fully acquainted with your Form, I may mention that this boy is extraordinarily stupid—"

"I have noticed that, too, sir."

"And the boy Skinner has several times been punished for perpetrating reckless and unfeeling practical jokes."

"I have noticed that proclivity in Skinner, sir. I will deal with Skinner, who has evidently been frightening this foolish boy."

"Bunter! Go away at once with Mr. Steele—"

"I—I daren't!" spluttered Bunter. "He's a cracksm—; he's the Court-field cracksm—! He tried to get me to his study for extra tool, to blow my brains out—"

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Steele. "This passes all patience!" exclaimed the Head. "Mr. Steele, you will deal severely with the boy who has frightened Bunter to this absurd extent!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Telephone for the police!" howled Bunter. "They want him! Old Grimes will jump at the chance, sir! He can't get hold of the Court-field cracksm—! He doesn't know that he's hiding at Greyfriars."

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "How dare you make such ridiculous suggestions, Bunter?"

"It's true, sir!" wailed Bunter. "True!" repeated the Head. "I begin to fear, Bunter, that you are not merely stupid—that you are out of your right senses."

"Wharton knows, sir! All the fellows know! And Skinner saw him hiding the pistol under his coat-tails—"

"Silence!"

Dr. Locke took Bunter by a fat shoulder, and twirled him across to Steele.

A terrific yell burst from Bunter.

"Yaroooo! Help! Help!"

"Will you be silent?" almost shrieked the Head.

"Help! Help!"

"I am truly sorry, sir, that you should have been disturbed and troubled like this," said Steele. "I will take this absurd boy away at once."

"Please do!" gasped the Head. "I think it will be advisable for a doctor to see him, perhaps. Use your own judgment, Steele."

The Remove master hooked Bunter out of the Head's study, and closed the door. Bunter quaked in his grasp.

"Open the door, Barnes!" howled Bunter. "Our new Form master's going to shoot me!"



"Oh dear! Help! I—I say, sir, let me off! I—I won't say a word about you if you spare my life!" yelled Bunter.

"You stupid boy, be silent!"

"I'll keep mum!" howled Bunter. "I won't go to the police! I swear I won't, sir! I'll deny having seen you burgling Hogben Grange, if you like. I'll tell everybody it was some other fellow, not a bit like you, sir. I will really! Owl! Leggo! Help!"

"You—you saw—what?" gasped Steele.

"I didn't, sir! I wasn't there! I never saw you that night at Hogben Grange, sir—it was all a j-j-joke!" stammered Bunter. "I haven't said a word about it, sir! Not a syllable! And I'll take it all back, sir! Every word!"

Steele's eyes glinted at the quavering Owl.

"Am I to understand, Bunter, that it was you who spread this ridiculous story, and not Wharton, as I supposed?"

"Oh! No, sir! It wasn't me! I never said a word! Besides, I told the

fellows in confidence! Strict confidence, sir! Made 'em all swear not to tell a soul! I did really, sir! Besides, I never mentioned the matter at all! Not a syllable passed my lips!"

"So it was you!"

"No!" howled Bunter. "I keep on telling you it wasn't me! D-d-don't shoot me, p-p-please!"

"Be quiet, Bunter! Cannot you understand that you have nothing to fear, that it is all an absurd mistake?" said Steele gently.

"Is—is it, sir?" gasped Bunter, blinking at him.

"Certainly it is. Calm yourself at once."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I—I shouldn't wonder if that beast Skinner was pulling my leg! He's always pulling somebody's leg! Oh dear!"



"I shall deal with Skinner for that," said Mr. Steele grimly. "I shall not punish you, Bunter, on this occasion, as you have evidently been deceived and frightened. But you must never act like this again, or I shall cane you very severely."

Bunter blinked at the master in doubt and apprehension. Even Bunter realised at last that, cracksm— or not, he was in no danger from the Form master. Certainly there was no sign of an automatic, either hidden under the coat-tails or elsewhere.

"C-c-can I go, sir?" gasped Bunter. "You may go!"

Bunter stutted away down the corridor.

His fat mind was greatly relieved at getting off so light from the "Court-field cracksm—," whom he still continued to think, in spite of everything, Mr. Richard Steele was. Another consolation Bunter had—Skinner was for it!

It would serve the beast right, thought Bunter; it would teach him a much-needed lesson.

Meanwhile, Mr. Richard Steele proceeded at a leisurely pace, to his study, where he selected a stout cane. Then he proceeded to the Remove passage to call on Skinner. That humorous youth had enjoyed his little joke at Bunter's expense, and now, after the feast, the reckoning was due.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Six for Skinner!

"H A, ha, ha!"
"It's too jolly bad!" said
Bob Cherry.

"That ass Bunter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a buzz of voices and a sound of laughter in the Remove passage. Skinner had been retailing his little jest on Bunter, and it evoked much merriment in the Remove.

"But where's the fat idiot now?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Half-way to Courtfield by this time if he got out!" said Skinner cheerfully. "He may come back with a bobby."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's too thick," said Bob. "The fat idiot will get into an awful row. It's too thick, Skinner."

"Thanks for your opinion, old bean," yawned Skinner. "Though I rather think it's like those things in the advertisements—of no value to anyone but the owner."

"It wasn't a bad wheeze," said the Bounder. "If they send a bobby back with Bunter it will be a show-up for Steele, at any rate."

"Not unless he's the giddy cracksman," said Hazeldene.

"Well, he is the giddy cracksman," said Vernon-Smith.

"Rot!" said Bob. "If he had anything to fear he would bolt! Well, has he bolted?"

"Wait till the bobby comes!" said Vernon-Smith. "I dare say he'll bolt fast enough when he sees him. I only hope they'll have sense enough to send a bobby back with Bunter."

"The Head will have a fit if they do!" said Snoot.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old porpoise!"

All eyes were turned on Billy Bunter as he came breathlessly up the staircase.

"Got that bobby?" chuckled Bob.

"Nunno! I—I couldn't get out! That beast Barnes wouldn't let me out by the garage, and he brought me back to the House!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" growled the

Bounder. Smithy, at all events, was disappointed that Bunter had not reached the police station.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I—I went to the Head," said Bunter. "Steele let me alone after that. The Head didn't believe me."

"Not really?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Such a likely story, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head is a doubting Thomas!" said Bob. "Try him again, Bunter—go and tell him next that old Prout is a pirate—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's jolly well true—Wharton knows it is! He was there with me and saw Steele burgling Hogben Grange, only he won't say so."

"You silly owl!" said Wharton.

"And Steele never had an automatic!" said Bunter plaintively.

"Skinner was pulling my leg! He said he saw Steele hunting for me with an automatic hidden under his coat-tails, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"And you believed that?" chortled Bob.

"Well, knowing Steele to be a dangerous cracksman, you know—"

said Bunter. "Cracksmen always have automatics, I believe. They always do in Coker's detective novels. I've read a lot of them. They always have them on the pictures, too."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the Greymfriars edition of Charley Peace!" murmured Bob.

There was a hush in the talk and laughter as Mr. Steele was seen coming up the Remove staircase. It was noticed with some uneasiness that he carried a cane under his arm.

The juniors eyed him curiously, eagerly. There was something intensely interesting in a man against whom such an extraordinary charge was brought. The Bounder and Skinner might believe that charge, for their own reasons; and many fellows might feel doubts. But to the greater part of the Remove the accusation seemed much more than doubtful. Their opinions swayed one way and the other, varying from time to time; but on the whole, there was a general inclination to regard the

charge as "rot," especially now the fellows knew that Bunter had told the Head. Obviously, the Head had totally disregarded it, and the juniors, naturally, had a great respect for their headmaster's judgment.

But the story, whether well-founded or unfounded, made Steele a figure of unusual interest.

He gave the group of juniors a pleasant smile and nod. Harry Wharton stepped back towards the open door of Study No. 1.

"Do not go, please, Wharton," said Steele. Even the merest trifle never seemed to escape Steele's eyes.

Wharton remained, with a cold and rather grim expression on his face. He had not forgotten that talk in the Form-room, and his resentment was as keen as ever.

"Skinner!" said Steele.

"Yes, sir?" mumbled Skinner uneasily. He did not like the look in the green grey eye that singled him out.

"You appear to have told Bunter a ridiculous story, and frightened him into breaking the rules of the House, and acting in a very absurd manner, even to the length of disturbing the headmaster."

"It was only a joke, sir," said Skinner, in alarm.

"A false statement made to a foolish boy is not a joke, Skinner. You must learn to keep your humorous proclivities within the bounds of the truth. I trust, Skinner, that six strokes of this cane will help you to remember that."

Skinner looked sullen and savage.

"You will bend over, Skinner," said Steele.

"Don't!" whispered the Bounder, in sarcastic imitation of Skinner's advice to himself in Form-room that morning.

Smithy certainly did not intend Steele to overhear that whisper. But the new master's ears seemed to be as keen as his eyes.

"Vernon-Smith, how dare you advise a boy to disobey his master? Take five hundred lines of Virgil, and bring them to me by Wednesday afternoon!"

The Bounder scowled blackly.

"Now, Skinner—"

Skinner, unwillingly and sullenly, bent over. The juniors looked on in silence, while the cane swished. As a Form master, Steele was only handing out what might have been expected. As a cracksman, he had no right to punish Skinner at all. Opinions differed and varied. But whichever he was, it was all one to the hapless Skinner; he had to take the six, and he took them.

Skinner, the castigation over, limped into his study, looking—as Bob Cherry remarked afterwards—like a demon in a pantomime. Steele tucked the cane under his arm again, and turned to Harry Wharton, a pleasant smile on his face.

"Wharton, I have to ask your pardon," he said.

Wharton started.

"Mine, sir? I don't understand."

"I had the impression that you had spread this absurd story in the Form, of which Skinner took advantage to frighten that foolish boy Bunter," said Steele. "I have since learned that Bunter was the foolish tattler; and I regret very much that I did not accept your assurance."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"I was aware," continued Steele, to the blank amazement of the Remove, "that Bunter was with you the night you saw me, under somewhat peculiar circumstances, at Hogben Grange last term."

Wharton caught his breath, and the Removes stared. The man was coming out plain with it. Was he going to

OH, GREAT! TOPPING!

It's always the same—these words of exclamation, expressing full satisfaction after reading through a copy of the NELSON LEE. You have often heard fellows, discussing the merits of other boys' papers, say—"Oh, that's a matter of opinion!" But with the stories that are published in the NELSON LEE opinions never vary. They are always the same—that the NELSON LEE is a great paper containing still greater stories! For twopence you are getting MORE THAN YOUR MONEY'S-WORTH in a copy of the

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Every Wednesday - - - - - At all Newsagents

explain, after all, and prove that it was all moonshine?

Steele seemed unconscious of the sensation his words had caused. He continued to address Wharton in the same pleasant tone.

"As Hunter did not recognise me during the first week of the term, and as I was aware that you had done so, Wharton, I think there is some excuse for my error," he said. "I conclude, from what I have now learned, that Hunter must have forgotten me for a time and remembered me later."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"I am sorry I doubted your assurance, Wharton! I ask your pardon."

"Oh, sir, it—it's all right!"

"Very good!"

"I haven't said a word, sir, as I said I wouldn't," said Harry, colouring. "But I'm glad you've spoken of it, sir, as it's been jolly awkward for me ever since Hunter let it out."

"I quite understand that," said Steele, with a nod. "I should have preferred this absurd story not to have become the talk of my Form, but since it has become so you are at liberty to speak as freely as you like. I trust the whole ridiculous matter will soon be forgotten."

With that Mr. Steele went down the Remove staircase and vanished. There was silence in the passage, broken by a groan from Skinner's study. Skinner seemed to be suffering from his "six," and his sense of humour was, for the present, completely in abeyance.

"Well," said Bob Cherry at last, with a deep breath, "the jolly old sportsman makes no bones about it!"

"The boneliness is not terrific."

"So you promised not to tell on him, Harry?" said Johnny Bull. "Well, you can cough it up now. He was the man you saw at Hogben Grange the night of the burglary?"

"He's told you so himself now," said Harry. "Yes!"

"Well, it beats Banagher," said Bob Cherry. "I can't make head or tail of it; but he's all right—straight as a string."

"Gammon!" said the Bounder. "I fancy he won't stay here long enough to ask for my lines. Most likely he'll be gone in the morning, and the Head's silver along with him."

There was a laugh at that; but some of the fellows wondered whether the Bounder was right.

He did not prove to be. Next morning Richard Steele was still at Greyfriars, taking the Remove as usual. Cracksmen or no cracksmen, obviously he was not going to bolt.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Remove!

"IT'S true!"

"It isn't!"

"It's as plain as anything."

"It's all rot!"

These expressions of opinion, and many more like them, were bandied about in the Remove during the following days.

The first thrill of excitement caused by Hunter's revelation had died away, but a keen interest in the matter remained.

Harry Wharton & Co., and most of their friends, took the view that the master of the Remove was straight; though they did not profess to be able to explain certain mysterious circumstances connected with him, and perhaps now and then felt some twinge of doubt cross their own minds.

The Bounder, on the other hand,

headed the party that believed the story fully and completely, and persisted in looking on Richard Steele as a particularly cunning and astute criminal.

Most of the Form, perhaps, had more or less open minds on the subject, and what they thought on the subject varied from one day to another.

Harry Wharton pointed out that if Steele was not what he seemed, he must have deluded the Head and the governors, as well as Inspector Grimes of Courtfield—which was practically impossible. The Bounder took the disrespectful view that the Head was an old donkey whom anybody could deceive; that the governors were no better—in fact, rather worse; and that Inspector Grimes was a priceless chump, and proved as much by being taken in by Steele.

As it was impossible to investigate the facts, fellows believed or disbelieved, as the spirit moved them; but the opinion of the majority inclined to the view that a Greyfriars master couldn't possibly be a breaker of the law.

Wharton pointed out, further, that even if the Head had been deluded by a cunning impostor, he had now been told; Hunter had told him. That should have opened his eyes. To which the Bounder rejoined that every fellow knew that schoolmasters go through life

WELL DONE, DERBYSHIRE!

The following clever Greyfriars limerick, sent in by: O. Betts, Meadowvale, Stenson Road, Sunny Hill, near Derby, has been adjudged a winner, so O. Betts gets a useful leather pocket wallet.

Two fellows named Dabney
and Fry,
Have to be most cunning and
"fly."

For Temple you see,
If they did not agree,
Would "dot" both of them
in the eye!

Put your thinking caps on, boys,
and win a prize you'll be proud of!

with their eyes shut to all things outside school matters.

So there were two adverse minorities in the Form, and a majority that had not made up its mind one way or the other.

Billy Hunter, of course, belonged to the Bounder's party. That Steele was a rascal of the deepest dye admitted of no doubt, to Hunter's mind—for Steele made him work!

Bunter had had his extra toot, and some more extra toot to follow, and he had to admit that Steele had not produced an automatic in his study, and it was obvious that Steele had not blown Hunter's brains out. That, indeed, in the opinion of the Remove, was impossible. You couldn't, as Peter Todd observed, blow out something that wasn't there!

A Form master who made a lot of fuss if a fellow mixed up Thomas Cromwell with Oliver Cromwell, who gave a fellow lines for asserting that it was Pontius Pilate who said "Take away that bauble"; was, in Hunter's opinion, capable of anything—from cracking cribs to cannibalism.

Bunter's opinion, certainly, was never valued in the Greyfriars Remove. But the Bounder was a man of weight in the Form, and he always had a following. Skinner & Co. backed up the Bounder heartily; not so much, perhaps, because they believed the worst of Richard Steele, but because Steele was in

authority, and Skinner & Co. were up against authority.

The discipline of the Form certainly suffered.

A schoolmaster rules more by prestige and the habit of obedience to authority, than anything else; and such a story about a master could not fail to shake his position in these respects. Fellows declared that they weren't going to kowtow to a dashed cracksmen, and weren't going to be jawed and licked by a man the police were after.

There was a certain quiet determination in the gentleman with the square jaw that prevented this sort of thing going much beyond words uttered out of his hearing. But it had its effect on the Form. Skinner & Co. were as impertinent as they dared to be; and the Bounder, who was reckless and had unbounded audacity, went further. It was not always easy for Steele, alert as he was, to put "paid" to the Bounder.

"You selecting the tripe for the literature class this afternoon, Wharton?" Smithy asked, a few days later.

"Yes; Steele's asked me to," answered Harry.

"Good!" said Smithy.

"Why good?" asked Harry. Wharton had often been given this task in Quelch's time; but he had never known the Bounder to take any interest in it before. The Bounder had no great taste for any sort of literature that did not deal with either horses or pounds, shillings, and pence.

"Well, I've been reading some of Hood's poems, and if Steele leaves it to you there's one about Eugene Aram—quite good stuff," said Smithy. "Put it up to me to read out in class—I'm going in for elocution, and I want to show off and show Steele how I can do it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Right-ho!" he assented.

And it was so!

In English literature that afternoon it dawned upon the captain of the Remove that the Bounder had pulled his leg, and drawn him into his campaign of ragging Steele.

The Bounder was put up to read out the poem, and when he came to the last lines, describing the arrest of the secret criminal who had been exposed at last, his look and voice took on a very special significance.

"And Eugene Aram walked between,
With gyves upon his wrist!"

The Bounder bestowed a wink on the class as he finished with those lines, and then stared directly at Steele, making it quite unmistakable what he intended to imply.

There was a gasp from the Remove.

They fully expected Steele to pick up his cane and order the audacious Smithy to bend over.

But the new master of the Remove was not to be caught so easily. It was not his cue to appear to see the Bounder's implication, though every fellow in the Form knew that he could see it.

Not by the flicker of a muscle did Steele betray any consciousness of the fact that the Bounder was gibing at him.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows, realising that the unscrupulous Bounder had made use of him to score off Steele; and he gave Smithy an angry look—for which Smithy cared nothing at all.

Smithy waited for the thunderbolt. He would not have objected to punishment—a punishment that would have been obviously unjust, for there was, of

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course, no proof that he was directing a shaft at the Form master.

But there was no thunderbolt. The pleasant smile on Mr. Steele's face remained unchanged.

"Very good," said Steele. "Very good indeed! Now we will discuss this work which Vernon-Smith has delivered so creditably."

Smithy was disappointed. At the same time it was agreed that the Bouncer had "got away with it" this time. Steele, the juniors told one another afterwards, must have been frightfully sick, and all the more so because he couldn't pin the Bouncer down.

There were some high words in the Rag on the subject. Wharton was angry, as he had a right to be.

"That was a dirty trick, Smithy," he said bluntly. "You were taking me in, and Steele might think that I was in it against him."

"I'm not bothering about what Steele thinks," yawned the Bouncer.

"Well, I think—"

"I'm not bothering about what you think, either," said the Bouncer coolly. Wharton compressed his lips.

"I've a jolly good mind—" he began.

Herbert Vernon-Smith laughed.

"With or without gloves?" he inquired. "All the same to me."

"Oh, wats!" grunted Wharton, turning away. It was not worth scrapping about; but Wharton was left feeling rather sore.

The Bouncer having got away with it, Billy Bunter was inspired by his evil genius to follow his example. Bunter, too, wanted to be admired by the Form for his nerve, his audacity, and for scoring off Steele. The Bouncer had not been caned, or even jawed, and Bunter expected the same happy result in his own case. He was not aware that he lacked the wary sagacity of the Bouncer, and he proceeded to exemplify once more the truth of that ancient saying that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. In the literature class fellows were allowed to suggest works, and that gave Bunter the chance he wanted for distinguishing himself.

"Please, sir, may we have 'Raffles'?" asked Bunter eagerly, on the very next occasion when the Remove gave up an hour of their valuable time to English literature.

"'Raffles'!" repeated Mr. Steele, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, sir—Raffles, the amateur cracksmen, sir," said Bunter. "It's fine, sir—all about cracking cribs, and burglaries—just what you would like, sir."

"What?"

"It's about a man who was a cracksmen and pretended to be something else, sir, just like you, sir—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I—I mean—" gasped Bunter, realising too late that he had expressed it rather unfortunately.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear! I—I mean, not just like you, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Not a bit like you, sir! That's what I really meant to say."

"Is this intended for impertinence, Bunter?" inquired Mr. Steele, taking up his cane.

"Oh, no, sir! I'm not pulling your leg, sir," stammered Bunter. "I never thought of asking for 'Raffles,' sir, because you're a cracksmen, too, sir! It never entered my mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, step out before the Form."

"Wha-a-at for, sir?"

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"I am going to cane you, Bunter, for impertinence."

"Oh lor'!"

Mr. Steele swished the cane.

"I am waiting, Bunter."

"B-b-but it ain't fair, sir," wailed Bunter. "You never caned Smithy last time, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you do not step out immediately, Bunter—" said Richard Steele in a deep voice.

Bunter hopped out in a great hurry.

Swish, swish!

They were quite light strokes; probably Mr. Steele had mercy on an unfortunate youth who was so severely handicapped in the way of intellect. But the Bull of Bashan had nothing on Bunter as he proceeded to express his feelings after those two flicks.

"Silence!" rapped out Steele. "Cease that absurd noise, Bunter."

"Yaroooo! Yooop!"

"Another sound, and I shall cane you severely."

There was not another sound. Bunter found that he could bear his injuries in silence. But until the Remove were dismissed William George Bunter sat and looked daggers at Steele. The Bouncer had got away with it, and Bunter couldn't see why he shouldn't have got away with it likewise. He felt that it was unjust.

When the Remove went out many of the juniors were chuckling. Bunter looked woebegone and wrathful.

"I say, you fellows, jever hear of such an unjust beast?" he complained. "Letting Smithy off the other day and taking it out of me."

Then the Bouncer made his little mistake.

"He can take it out of you, fatty, because you don't matter. He will think twice before he takes it out of me."

Unfortunately for Smithy, Mr. Steele was following the Remove out of the Form-room.

"Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, my hat!" The Bouncer spun round. "Yes, sir?"

"I heard your remark, Vernon-Smith." For once the good-tempered master of the Remove looked really angry.

"Indeed, sir," said Smithy, breathing hard. His remark had been pure swank, and certainly not intended for Steele's ears.

"Your words implied, Vernon-Smith, that your Form-master punishes one boy for a fault that he overlooks in another—that he is unjust."

Vernon-Smith looked dogged. He was "for it," but he was not the fellow to retract what he had said.

"Do you think so, sir?" he said.

"Your words could have no other meaning, Vernon-Smith. If, however, you were only speaking foolishly and thoughtlessly I am willing to accept your apology."

The Bouncer set his lips.

"I'm not apologising, sir!"

"Then you meant what you said?"

"I generally do, sir!" drawled the Bouncer.

"Very well. Step into the Form-room again, Vernon-Smith."

The Bouncer, with a hard, set face, went back into the Form-room. The juniors in the passage heard the cane fall six times in succession—in strokes very different from those that Bunter had received.

When Smithy came out again he was almost white, and his eyes were burning. One look at his face warned the other fellows not to speak to him then, even in the way of condolence. But Bunter, of course, was blind to the danger-signals.

"I say, Smithy—" said Bunter cheerfully.

The Bouncer glared at him.

"Did it hurt, old chap?" asked Bunter.

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as he rolled along the passage. The Bouncer stamped away, leaving him roaring.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Downy!

"**W**HO did that?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rub it out before Steele comes in!"

"Let it alone!"

"Look here! There'll be a frightful row—"

"Let it alone!" snapped the Bouncer.

It was third lesson a day or two later. The Remove had come in; but Steele, on his way to the Form-room, was delayed. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, whose Form were not in yet, had caught him in the passage, and stopped him for a few minutes' chat. Prout had a way of waylaying other masters in the passages for a little chat, and Steele, being a new man at Greyfriars, was not so wary as the rest of the staff.

So for those few minutes the Remove had their Form-room to themselves. And the first object that met their view, as they trooped in, was the big blackboard, standing on its easel, with a chalk drawing almost filling its space.

The drawing was rather cleverly done, and it represented a burglar kneeling at a safe, with a policeman just behind, about to drop his hand on the malefactor's shoulder.

Someone, evidently, had "sneaked" into the Form-room while the other fellows were out in break, and executed that chalk drawing on the blackboard, to greet Steele's eyes when he came in.

Most of the fellows could guess who it was. Skinner of the Remove was remarkably clever with pencils and chalks.

"You did that, Skinner!" said Bob Cherry.

"Think so?" yawned Skinner.

"Well, didn't you?"

"How could I, when three fellows are prepared to swear that I never came near the House during break?" asked Skinner.

"Which three?" asked Harry Wharton suspiciously.

"Smithy, Snoop, and Stott."

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. That cackle expressed Bunter's opinion of the value of the three witnesses—an opinion that, for once, was shared by all the Remove.

"Well, I suppose Steele doesn't know you draw, as he's new here," said Frank Nugent. "You're too slack to draw well in class."

"It would be rather unjust to pick on me, I think," said Skinner blandly. "Anyhow, I've got my witnesses, luckily."

"The luckfulness is terrific, and the whooperfulness is also great!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Look here! Rub it out!" said Harry Wharton. "Steele will be awfully sick if he sees it."

"Let him be!" said the Bouncer.

"Whoever did that intended to make the rotter sick—and you've no right to interfere. Let it alone!"

"Well, as head boy—"

"Oh, don't come the head boy game now!" snapped the Bouncer. "Mind your own business for once, you blessed little Eric!"



As the new Form master stepped into the study, Bunter took refuge behind the majestic figure of Dr. Locke. "K-k-keep him off, sir!" he roared.

Wharton coloured. "I can tell you that Steele's too downy not to find out who did it. The man's booked for a row!" he said angrily.

"Well, that needn't worry you," said Skinner. "Let it alone!"

"You'd better—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the downy bird!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Form master's footsteps were heard in the corridor, and there was a rush of the Removites to their places.

Steele came into the Form-room.

He gave a glance first at the flushed and excited faces of the Remove, which told him plainly enough that something was "on." Then he glanced at the blackboard.

For a moment he stood quite still, staring at the scene depicted in chalk. The Remove waited breathlessly. For that breathless moment a pin might have been heard to drop in the Form-room.

Steele scanned the chalk drawing intently, as if interested in the draughtsmanship. Then he turned to the Form. His face was cool and calm, as usual, but there was a glint in the grey eyes that boded trouble for the artist if Steele discovered him.

"A very good drawing," said Steele pleasantly. "There is at least one boy in my Form who can draw, if he would take the trouble. A pity he does not reserve his efforts for the proper time and place."

Skinner felt a qualm. Did the downy beast know he could draw? It seemed to him that the grey eyes lingered on him.

"But, clever as that drawing is," went on Steele, "I am afraid that I must punish the artist—rather severely. That drawing is intended as an insult to the master of this Form. The boy who

chalked on the blackboard will kindly stand out."

Silence!

"I order that boy to stand out before the Form!" said the new master of the Remove.

No one stirred.

Steele came a little nearer to the Form, and his keen eyes searched face after face.

The juniors sat tight. The Bounder ventured on a cheeky grin, rather hoping that Steele would suspect him and pick on him. All the Remove could have witnessed that such a drawing was beyond Smithy's powers, and he would have been pleased to see the new master jump to conclusions and make a fool of himself.

But Steele did not pick on the Bounder. Perhaps he had observed more of the powers and capacities of members of his Form than the juniors supposed. The Remove were to learn that there were few things, if any, that escaped that mysterious Form master's penetration.

From face to face Steele's keen eyes travelled many of the juniors flushing consciously under it. Some of them met Steele's look squarely, others dropped their eyes—among them Skinner. Billy Bunter crimsoned and spluttered under that searching gaze—not with the fear of detection, as a less keen master than Steele might have concluded, but with the fear of being suspected.

"Please, sir, it wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

Steele smiled.

"I am quite sure that it was not you, Bunter," he remarked. "I am sure you are incapable of that—"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Or anything else requiring cleverness," added Steele.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Steele finished his inspection, and stepped back.

The Remove waited for him to speak. How he was going to detect the culprit, unless he had the penetrating powers of a professional detective, nobody in the Remove could see. Even if he had observed that Skinner was clever at drawing, there was nothing in that to punish a fellow on.

"Once more," said Steele, "I order the boy who was guilty of this act of insolence to step out!"

There was no movement.

"No takers!" murmured the Bounder, and some of the juniors giggled.

"This," said Steele, indicating the blackboard, "is a very clever chalk drawing. But a boy handling chalks, and desiring to conceal the fact, should be very careful—very careful indeed. He should take care not to get a smudge of chalk on his waistcoat."

Skinner's hand flew to his waistcoat before he knew what he was doing.

"Oh!" gasped the Remove.

"Skinner," thundered Steele, "stand out!"

Almost trembling, the wretched Skinner dragged himself out before the class.

"Your work, I think, Skinner?" said Mr. Steele, with another gesture towards the blackboard.

"I—I didn't know—I—I never meant—I—I—I—" stammered Skinner incoherently.

"You do not display such skill as this in the drawing class, Skinner."

"I—I—I—"

"I am afraid you are too slack to make an effort, Skinner, unless you have an ill-natured and disrespectful motive," said Steele, shaking his head. "I shall speak to the drawing master, and tell him that he may expect better things of you."

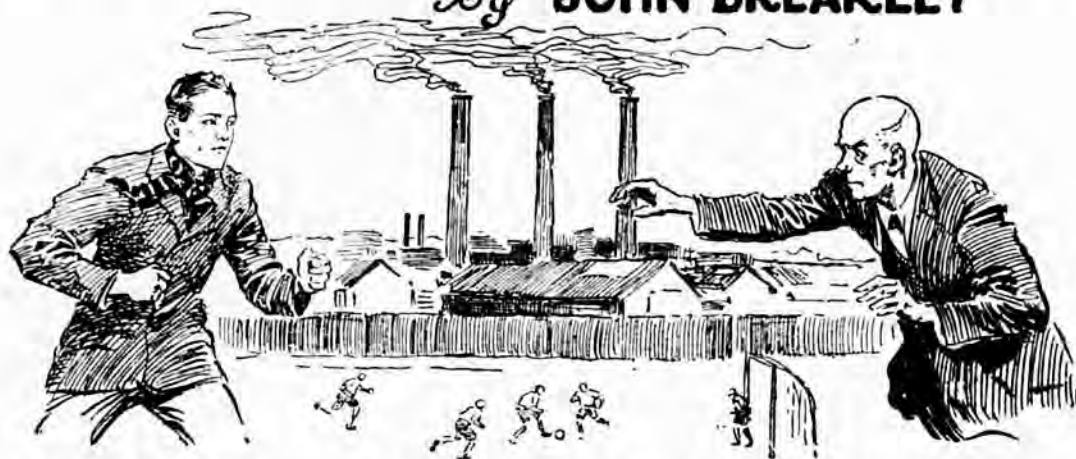
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NO DULL MOMENTS HERE, BOYS . . . IT'S THRILLS GALORE!

Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

by JOHN BREARLEY



The Evening Over!

AS soon as the contest was finished, Sir James Fossett stepped into the ring, a tall and dignified figure, with upraised hand.

"Men of Frazer's, we will give three cheers for one of the best sportsmen in this city. Mr. Peter Frazer! Hip, hip, hip—"

But even as the delighted, grinning mob on the benches and round the walls were filling their lungs for three of the best, there came a flash and a roar—a low rumble, and the crash of falling glass. Then footsteps, and the noise of shouting men!

With a mighty vault, Peter was out of the ring, tearing off his gloves as he ran up the gangway that led to the door.

"Open up, there!" he roared, and, followed by a milling, trampling crowd, rushed into the yard.

His first glance was skyward, towards the five huge chimneys. But it was not the stacks. They trailed their orange flames and black smoke serenely across the sky.

He looked wildly around, and there, in the wing of the building containing the office and laboratory, a smashed and tattered window shone redly. The office was afire!

"Fire, fire!"

In an instant the crowd swarmed out of the new gymnasium, and with Peter, Mr. Dimmock, and Sir James Fossett in the lead, raced across the yard towards the office building.

Someone darted to where the alarm-bell hung within the gates, and as it clanged its warning above the shouts and cries of the excited ironmen, the night shift came piling out of the foundry like bees from a hive.

Reaching the door at top speed, Peter grabbed at the handle, but as he did so an iron hand on his shoulder pulled him away. It was Moller, and in his other arm he held a big extinguisher.

"Me first!" he growled, and dived in through the door, the others at his heels.

They raced up the stairway and arrived at the office, where they found fire and desolation!

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Peering through the smoke from the doorway, they made out the thick steel of the safe lying twisted across the debris of a desk that had caught fire. Swirling, blackened bits of paper filled the room, and flames were licking greedily at the window-frame and a smashed chair.

Hiss-zzzzz! went Moller's extinguisher over everything. The flames died magically. But before they were half out Peter had thrust past the engineer and was feverishly searching in the wrecked safe.

The Faulder tender! There was not a sign of it, only a mass of burned and tattered books!

As Sir James and Mr. Dimmock came towards him, he turned a set, white face towards them.

"They've done it," he said quietly.

In the wrecked room the little group stood staring in dismayed silence, while from the yard below the clamour of excited men drifted upwards.

Peter's only eighteen, but he's more than a match for eighteen crooks double his age!

Mr. Dimmock's face was averted. Sir James laid a quivering hand on Peter's shoulder. If ever there was a hopeless situation this was it. Books, papers, everything in the safe had been blown and burned beyond recognition.

Peter's enemy had scored a triumph at last.

From the background, suddenly, Moller's voice growled:

"Listen!"

The row down in the yard below had died away. They heard a scuffling of feet, the sharp rap of orders, and then the heavy tread of feet on the stairway. Into the room, with two stalwart constables at his heels, came Inspector Button, and, behind them, the inspector's little sharp-faced assistant.

"Good-evening, Mr. Frazer! Ah, good-evening, Sir James! More work!" boomed the inspector, and plunged into a hailstorm of questions.

The little assistant, however, made for the safe, and was soon examining it.

His examination took a bare five minutes.

"Well, Smith?"

"Safe forced first, sir. Expert's work. Short time-fuse bomb placed on the shelf here afterwards. Messed up the inside completely, sir."

He held out some charred bits of metal, then pointed to the twisted door.

"Lock taken out clean as a whistle," he explained.

Once again, before anyone could speak, Moller's voice growled:

"Listen!"

This time the noise beneath them died away, and it was a youngster's high-pitched voice that rang out, sharp and imperative.

"Let me through, chaps! And take your hands off him, there! They'll see to him upstairs!"

The dull buzz of voices burst suddenly into a furious roar as the door below was forced open, and boots scraped and rang on the iron stairs.

All eyes in the wrecked office turned to the door. Several men were climbing the stairs, and one of them was fighting and struggling. In a little bunch they burst through the doorway—Baker, Haggerty, and Mullins. Between them they half-held, half-supported a little, square man, who, at sight of the police, put up a last frantic struggle, then relapsed as suddenly into dogged, sullen silence.

Behind them all stood Tim Osborne.

On seeing the prisoner Mr. Smith, the expert, gave a little chuckle of delight.

"Ah, welcome, Sidney—welcome! This is a pleasure! I thought it was your autograph on the safe door. And how was Dartmoor when you left it four days ago?"

The little man's evil face twisted in a snarl at the detective's banter.

"You're clever, Mr. Busy Smith! See how much you'll get out o' me! Me, I don't know nothin'."

"Who is this man?" barked Inspector Button.

"Sidney Hopkins, sir, alias as much as you like. One of the best at this game in the world. I heard he'd just finished at Dartmoor the other day. Oh, Sidney, you have torn it this time!"

The inspector nodded to the constables, who stepped up and took the cracksmen from his captors.

The inspector turned to the ironmen.

"Where did you find him?"

"Hidin' round t' slag heaps, mister,"

answered Haggerty. "But 'twas young Tim did it."

All eyes turned to Tim Osborne's thin figure by the doorway.

"I—I thought I saw someone slink off in the dark as I crossed the yard, sir," replied Tim shyly. "I—I was going into the gym to see the last of the boxing."

"And you tackled him on your own?"

"Oh, no, inspector! I—I thought it best to call help. So I found these three, and we ran him down. I was lucky to find them together."

Baker's big mouth opened, and his jaw dropped.

At Tim's request he, Mullins, and Haggerty had given up the evening's boxing, and spent the time hidden in the darkness about the foundry yard. For what reason they did not know until they heard the explosion in the office, and saw a furtive figure rush out of the door, and dash away. Then Tim had nailed the man, and they had arrived to complete the capture.

And now here was Tim speaking as though the whole thing had happened casually.

"Why—" began Baker indignantly. But Haggerty, whose wits were quicker, saved Tim's game by shoving an elbow into the big man's wind, and Baker's wrath dried up in a spluttering gasp.

The little crook, however, standing in the grip of the police with the handcuffs shining on his wrists, suddenly twisted his head, and turned eyes that were bright and hard with malice on Tim.

"Yer liar! It was a trap—"

Inspector Button flicked his finger, and the man was promptly silenced. Out of the corner of his mouth Mr. Smith whispered something to his chief, and, after a second's pause, the great man nodded.

"Take him along!" he ordered, and turned to Sir James. "We'll hold the inquiry at the station, Sir James," he said. "This man's a capture. By the time we're through with him, we'll know quite a lot about those who are up against you, Mr. Frazer."

Hopkins turned once more in the constable's grip, as they hustled him towards the door.

"You big lobster!" he gritted. "You'll be busy."

With that they jerked him out of the room, down the stairs, and battled him through the wrathful crowd of ironmen below in the yard. And it was a hard fight, too, for Peter's men were in ugly temper.

Up in the office Peter was listening dully to the inspector's pompous voice questioning Tim and the others. What did it all matter now? Faulder's tender had gone up in smoke, and it had been a smashing victory for the Scarred Man. Everything of importance had been destroyed. Impossible now, with only Sunday remaining, to get out the mass of figures once more.

And Monday was the last day!

It was victory for the Scarred Man. And word would go round that Frazer's Foundry was still unreliable. Trouble was still there in the camp. It didn't matter what they did now to that poor little beast of a crook.

It was Sir James Fossett who broke up the meeting. He saw with quick sympathy that Peter had had enough for the time being. With a firm handshake he turned to the inspector, who was still trying to get a fact or two from Tim Osborne, while Mr. Smith looked on with a smile at the back of his shrewd eyes.

"Let's get along, inspector!" was all Sir James said; but, somehow, in five minutes the room was cleared, and only

Peter, with Mr. Dimmock and Moller were left.

Silence fell once more. Peter, perched on the table, stared miserably at the heap of paper in the safe. He felt as near blubbing as he had done since he was a kid. Mr. Dimmock, head bowed and hands in pockets, wandered aimlessly to the window and stared out.

Only Moller moved. Slowly he looked around at Peter's dejected figure, and Mr. Dimmock's bowed shoulders. Thrusting his hand into his inside pocket he pulled out a bulky package, and laid it silently on Peter's knee.

For a long, long minute the young ironmaster stared down at the package vacantly. Then, as the meaning of it dawned on him, he clutched at the envelope with feverish fingers, wrenched it open, and dragged out a mass of papers.

It was the Faulder tender!

Whirling off the table he gripped Moller's arm with a force that made the engineer wince, strong man that he was.

"Great Scott, man, where did you get it?"

The explosive question made Mr. Dimmock spin round from the window as from an electric shock. He darted across the room as Peter, turning from Moller, dived towards him, the tender in his outstretched hands.

"It's safe—it's safe!" he yelled. "Look! Every paper! Quick! Let's see if they're all there!"

His strong fingers tore the envelope from end to end as he struggled to get the papers out. He flung the packet aside, and was about to count the stiff leaves when Moller, at his elbow, reached out a huge paw and took the whole lot from his astonished grasp.

Calmly the engineer pushed the tender back into his inside pocket.

"Don't worry; it's all there," he said.

The others crowded round him, dancing with excitement, and pounded his shoulders.

"But where did you get it from? How do you know? How did you come to have it? Why wasn't it burnt?"

Moller's heavy face did not move.

"It didn't burn because it wasn't there when Hopkins opened the safe and blew everything inside to smithereens," he explained. "I had it."

Mr. Dimmock waved his hands.

"But when did you take it, Moller?" he cried.

"Fifteen minutes after Mr. Frazer put it in."

Peter fell back a step.

"You—you opened the safe after we'd gone?"

"Ay!"

INTRODUCTION.

Peter Frazer, a strapping youngster of eighteen, straight from a Public School, arrives in the splendid industrial city of Maxport to take over his strange legacy from his dead wife—Frazer's Iron Foundry. Even before reaching his new home, Peter falls into the hands of a gang of ruffians led by a scurred man, and barely escapes with his life. At the Works the youngster learns from his manager, Mr. Dimmock, that this gang have brought Frazer's to the brink of ruin, and with grim determination, Peter sets out to smash them.

At first he finds even his own men hostile, but when once he has won them over, the scurred man and his followers are practically beaten. Meanwhile, business for the foundry begins to improve, but Peter, not content, intervenes Sir James Fossett, the mayor of Maxport, and secures huge contracts, that set Frazer's on the road to prosperity. One evening, after the foundry football team has won its way into the semi-final of the Works' Cup, Sir James Fossett formally opens the new pavilion of Frazer's Sports Club. Peter has arranged an exciting programme of bouts in the boxing-ring, and to the delight of his men winds up the evening by taking on a prominent Maxport boxer in a fast three-round "scrap."

(Now read on.)

"But why, man—why?" cried the manager.

"I thought it'd be better in my care than in that safe. And they're not the firm's books that are burned, either. I moved them, too. That's all junk there."

"You—you knew someone would attack the safe?" gasped Mr. Dimmock, while Peter stared at Moller oddly.

"Nay, I didn't know. But I guessed." A sudden thought struck Peter Frazer.

"And you let Hopkins carry out his plan, and Tim Osborne was outside watching in the dark with the other three," he cried. "Did you arrange that?"

Moller's firm mouth closed tightly.

"Who are you, Moller?"

"The question came from Mr. Dimmock, and the manager's voice was hard."

And so was Moller's as he answered. "A loyal servant to Mr. Frazer, sir, as I was to his uncle. And Tim; he's just a good lad."

Mr. Dimmock was taken aback. He apologised.

"And as I am too, Moller. I beg your pardon. Really, I was not—We'll never be able to thank you enough for to-night's work—eh, Peter? But—forgive me—you must acknowledge your methods of guarding the firm are—well, strange!"

Moller took Mr. Dimmock's hand slowly and shook it. Then he turned questioning eyes on Peter.

"I'll keep this till Monday, sir," he said, tapping his pocket.

Peter shook his head.

"You can't do that, Moller," he objected. "Suppose they tumble that you've got the tender, and go for you between now and Monday?"

Moller grinned.

"That's the reason I didn't say anything while old Bumblebees and the rest were around. Now, there's only we three know I've got the Faulder tender." His deep eyes glimmered dangerously. "I don't think they'll go for me," he drawled.

Peter slowly extended his hand. They gripped.

"You're a funny chap, Moller," he said quietly.

"Ay, sir! An' I hope somebody's enjoying the joke," replied Moller cryptically.

Peter turned to the window and looked out. The men saw him, and he had to wait to make himself heard. Then:

"Thank you, lads! Go home now! It's been a great night, and everything's fine!"

When Rogues Fall Out!

"RED" GRANGER lifted a haggard face from his clenched fists, and slowly turned a smouldering eye on the remnants of his gang.

Stretched across the rickety table Spider Huggins slept noisily, head pillowed in outflung arms. Two others, Griddle and Murphy, slumped dully back in their chairs and stared silently at nothing, while over in a dark corner another whistled dolefully, and played with a pack of greasy cards.

And this was what was left of the gang of tough fighting men that had dominated Frazer's Foundry, and most of Maxport's dockland only a few short months ago.

The den they were in was squalor itself, being just part of a long, echoing, stone passage, damp and mouldering. Two foul rugs, fastened from the walls, acted as doors and kept out some of

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the draught; and the space between held a table, some broken stools, chairs, and tattered mattresses.

It was a terrible place; but as a refuge it was nearly perfect. And a safe refuge was what Granger's Gang had to have, every man jack of them, so comfort had to go by the board.

Their leader's face in the light of a smoky lamp reflected his heavy thoughts. They were beaten—the Scarred Man was beaten. Only Granger of all his men knew the real identity of Peter Frazer's bitter enemy; but the knowledge was useless to him, for the Scarred Man held them in the hollow of his hand, and his vengeance would be swift.

Granger writhed impotently at his thoughts. Up above them, in the docks, there were still channels by which he could elude the police, ships by which he could slip out of the country. But without money he was powerless. And they had no money, nor would the Scarred Man provide them with any until—until Peter Frazer was finished.

Suddenly Granger stiffened in his seat, his eyes fierce, and alert. At the same moment one of the rugs swung aside, and another member of the gang stepped in.

"He's coming!"

There came a scuffle from the darkest corner of the den, and Charles, the Scarred Man's brother, his face whiter and sharper than ever from privation and lack of exercise, shuffled to the table.

A footstep sounded sharply on the stone, the rug swung aside once more, and the Scarred Man stepped inside.

As usual, he was muffled to the chin in his oilskin cape; but his bald head, with its terrible mark, gleamed in the murky lamplight.

"Good-evening, men!"

An indistinct mutter answered the smooth, gentle greeting. Spider lurched out of his chair, and the Scarred Man took it courteously.

"Well, Granger?"

Granger's eyes, deep sunk in his head, glittered evilly, and it was a long minute before he replied.

"Well," he sneered. "Where've you been the last two weeks?"

"Busy, Granger."

"Busy!" There was bitter venom in the gang leader's voice. "Busy! A great schemer you are. Busy! See here, mister, we've had enough! We're fed-up! Not a plot, not a single job have you brought off, and we're down here, and Frazer's up top! We're quittin'—"

"When I tell you to!"

Granger's chair went backwards with a crash, and he sprang to his feet, snarling, arms crooked, face working with fury. But the Scarred Man did not flinch. Only his hand moved a little, and the muzzle of a small gun peeked grimly over the table-edge.

Inch by inch Granger caved in, and fell back groping for his chair.

"We're wasting time, Granger."

The man's powerful personality over-awed the tough as it had done before on occasion. They sat huddled in silence, staring with dull eyes at the bald head, and its livid scar.

"What about the safe-cracker, boss?"

grunted Spider, at last.

"What about him, Spider? He bungled his job, and he's paid the penalty."

"Didn't he split?"

The Scarred Man's mouth twisted slightly.

"If he did, I fear the police were disappointed. Hopkins knew nothing, except that he was paid to crack the safe at Frazer's Foundry. Give me credit for some brains, my dear Spider."

Granger laughed gratingly.

"But t'other side's got more, mister."

The words were like a spark in a powder-barrel. Into the Scarred Man's eyes leapt such a murderous ungovernable fury that they danced like hot coals. Only Granger of all the gang had the nerve to face him; the others shrank back like rats from a light.

Across the table the two men glared at each other while the rest held their breaths. Then the Scarred Man recovered himself with a terrific effort.

"Score to you, Granger," he mur-

mured. "But now to work. At last I have found out something that will interest you greatly—the something that has baulked our efforts all along. I've found out where our danger lies."

There was a tense silence.

"Go on!" gritted Granger, at last.

"Moller and the boy Osborne. Know who they are?"

"No!"

"Father and son. Moller's been a handler of men all over the world—miner, seaman, soldier. Just the playmate for you, Granger. And he's got a strong pull with the police. Secret service—eh, Granger?"

"It doesn't seem to worry you, anyway."

"It does, Granger. What sort of a foundryman was Moller when he joined Frazer's two years ago? What did the men think of him?"

"Nothing," growled Granger. "He didn't know the work at all. Old Frazer used to prance round showing him. But tough—tough as they make 'em. Sort of bodyguard for the old man—eh? Is that what you're getting at? You should know."

The other nodded.

"Well, he failed on that job," chuckled Granger grimly. "What's Osborne?"

"A terror!" snapped the Scarred Man. "When Moller cabled him to come over here, he was in the Canadian secret police, watching the American border north of Chicago. It was he who shot Luigi, and caught Hopkins."

There came an ugly growl from the hard-breathing men.

The Scarred Man lifted his hand.

"Don't meddle with either of them!" he warned. "You'll get hurt. Peter Frazer's our game."

At mention of the young ironmaster, Granger's wrath blazed out again.

"Ay, and a fine game it is!" he roared, standing up and pounding on the table. "And where has it landed us? He was our game five months ago, and look where we are! Job after job you've tried to pull off. They've all failed, and you've always got excuses. And we're here in this—this hole, and you can walk about free."

His rage brought the gang to their feet, and murderous eyes gleamed at the figure sitting impassively at the table. But neither the man's eyes or the little gun in his hand wavered.

"Fools!" he snapped, at last. "Must I starve you into submission? I am your leader. Don't forget it! Show a face above ground, any of you, and you'll be caught like rabbits! Disobey me, and—I only obtained this information about Moller and Osborne yesterday. Now I know our danger. Before the week's out, we'll have Peter Frazer."

The gang fell back. They were toughs, all of them, but weaklings at bottom, and their cramped life had sapped what nerve they had. Only Granger was undaunted.

"P'raps!" he sneered. "I think I'll come up and get him myself—with the boys here."

The other rose to his feet, his face livid.

"Try!" he screamed. "Try anything off your own bat, Granger, and mark my words, it'll be your finish! Too long I've waited patiently for the Frazers! I'll not be baulked now!"

Granger laughed in his face. With more brains and more courage than his followers he was getting desperate. The capture of Peter Frazer meant money to him, although his job was to

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stand by and carry out the Scarred Man's instructions. But the leader's constant failures made Granger contemptuous. Peter Frazer meant money. And money meant escape.

He had sense enough to hold his tongue, however, and, without another word, the Scarred Man turned on his heel and flung out through the rug curtain. As his footsteps began to die away, Charles gave a cry and darted out after him.

He was back in a few minutes, carrying in his arms a big basket of food. Like wolves the men fell on it, chucking him aside brutally, so he crept to where Granger sat glowering, and whispered:

"He'll be back on Monday, Red. You—you've angered him."

Grabbing him viciously, Granger sneered.

"Too bad!" he growled, and threw the little man squealing across the passage.

"Come here—all of you!"

The savage command made his men look up from their food. Still chewing, they gathered round the table where Granger stood, fists clenched, eyes shining determinedly.

He jerked his head mockingly towards the curtain.

"Never mind what he says, fellows! He's mad, I reckon! We'll go and get Frazer ourselves. He won't say anything when we've got the cub!"

There was a startled gasp. Granger continued:

"To-day's Saturday. Frazer'll be away on t'other side of the town playing in the semi-final, and he'll stay with the lads afterwards, so we can't get him to-night. But to-morrow's Sunday."

Quickly he seated himself, while the others closed round eagerly, even the little man creeping up close.

"Now, listen! Sundays there's only a furnace-shift on. That means no one much in the yard. Now, get round—all of you—and listen!"

It was a simple plan he unfolded, but a bold and desperate one—so desperate, in fact, that three of the men fell back in dismay.

Granger glowered at them fiercely, but Spider Hoggins and Murphy nodded approval.

Only little Charles spoke up. "But you mustn't!" he yelled. "I will—"

Granger's eyes gleamed. His right fist closed quietly, and the arm that lay on the table straightened suddenly like a piston-rod. The knotted fist flashed upwards, and took Charles flush on his pointed chin. It lifted him stiffly out of his chair, crumpled him up, and hurled him into a corner like a heap of bundled rags.

Without another look at him, the gang bent once more to business.

Granger's Desperate Effort!

A BIG fire burnt brightly in the long room at Manston, where Peter and Mr. Dimmock, stretched out comfortably, took their ease in big armchairs.

Old Anna had served their supper, and, having cleared the meal away, had gone silently upstairs to her room, leaving Mr. Dimmock to his paper, and Peter to his pleasant thoughts.

Of the Faulder tender there was no sign—the safe contained only a mass of burned and tattered books!



All was peace. Three weeks had slipped by since Moller's mysterious, but timely action, had saved the Faulder tender from destruction, and now everything was going swimmingly.

Peter sighed comfortably as he reflected on the lucky brain-wave that had sent him to Sir James Fossett for advice and help. The Mayor of Maxport was his firm friend. And Frazer's Foundry at last was set firmly on the road to prosperity once more.

Yesterday the football team had won their way into the Works Cup Final. It had been a terrific battle, and only a snap shot from Hammond in the very last minute had done the trick. Both teams had crawled off the field without another kick in them.

So, for once in a way, Peter was glad to loaf quietly by his own fireside. His long legs ached still, and he had a lump on his ankle as big as an egg.

Turning in his chair he stared over his shoulder through the window at a sight he never tired of, his great foundry chimneys belching clouds of flame-tinged smoke.

Away across the dark football field, only the lights from the foundry itself shone dully. At the top of each chimney, a glare of red shone beneath the thick smoke. All else, the out-buildings, the yard, and the wharf were still and deserted that Sunday night. He drew a long, deep breath. Good old foundry!

The electric light in the cosy room snapped out with a click. From the other side of the fire came a sudden, startled gasp, and the frantic rustle of a paper as Mr. Dimmock leapt to his feet.

Peter whipped round. In the centre of the room stood a man, still as a statue. His cap was pulled down over his eyes, and a black rag hid his mouth and chin. The leaping flames from the big fireplace struck purple lights from the squat revolver held fast in a rock-like fist.

"Up with 'em!"

The voice was low and fierce. Their hands went up slowly. There was no help for it!

"You—you villain!" spluttered Mr. Dimmock furiously; but the man silenced him with an ugly movement. Simultaneously two other men appeared out of the shadow at the other end of the room.

"Take him out!"

The gun swung squarely on Peter sitting by the fire, and the men sidled towards Mr. Dimmock, whose hands were working feverishly in rage and excitement.

"Hurry, you fools!" the gunman snapped viciously, without taking his eyes off Peter for a second, over his shoulder. "And not a sound—you two!"

The manager shrank back, arms crooked fiercely, but the two men came on steadily.

Coolly Peter measured the distance from the armchair to the man with the gun. It was too far for one single leap, especially with the firelight shining full on him; but if Mr. Dimmock put up a scrap—

"Don't!" snarled the gunman.

And Peter's tense muscles relaxed.

"Quite a mind reader!" he grinned.

The big hand, holding the revolver, tightened with rage.

"An' no lip from you, Mr. Bloomin' Frazer!" the man spat. "Move before I say so, and you'll be sorry! Take him away, curso you!" he flung at his accomplices.

Between them the men grabbed Mr. Dimmock and jerked him away from the fire, down the long room, and into his own little study. It occurred to Peter like a cold douche that they must have entered that way, through the little side window, and so into this room.

In deadly silence ironmaster and gunman watched each other in the flickering firelight. And the gun never wavered.

(Young Peter Frazer's in one of the tightest corners of his life, but he's not one to lose his nerve in emergencies! See that you read next week's enthralling instalment of this powerful sporting serial. You won't find one dull line in it, chums!)

WANTED BY THE POLICE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"I—I—I—"

"What excuse have you to offer, Skinner?"

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Skinner. "I—I never meant—I'd never have done it, sir; but another fellow gave me the tip to do it, as I can draw, sir. I—I'm awfully sorry, sir—"

"No doubt—now!" said Steele. "You have reason to be sorry, Skinner—unlike the boy who inspired this work of art, and who now sits in safety while you take your punishment."

Up jumped the Bouncer.

"It was I, sir!"

"Good old Smithy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Steele's glance turned on the Bouncer. To the surprise of the Bouncer, the whole Form, his look was not unkindly.

"It was you, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir," said the Bouncer doggedly. "I put Skinner up to it—I'd have done it myself if I could draw."

"A very frank confession," said Steele. "You may sit down, Vernon-Smith."

The Bouncer stared at him. He had fully expected, when he owned up, to get the larger share of what punishment was going. Apparently, however, Steele did not intend to punish him. He dropped rather limply on his Form. "Skinner!"

"Ye-es, sir!" moaned Skinner. The Bouncer might face a severe licking with cool hardihood; but not so Skinner. The prospect of "six" from the young master's hefty arm made Skinner fairly cringe.

"Take the duster!"

"The—the duster!" stammered Skinner.

"Yes, and rub the blackboard clean."

Skinner blinked at him, took the duster, and obeyed. The "work of art" was rapidly obliterated.

"Thank you," said Steele urbanely. "Now you may go back to your place, Skinner."

Skinner could not believe his ears. "Mum-mum-may I, sir?" he stammered.

"You may! I cannot punish you without punishing also the boy who inspired your action—and who, for reasons which I trust will be obvious to my Form, I do not care to punish. Go to your place!"

Skinner tottered to his place, hardly daring to believe in his good luck.

"And you need not rub your waistcoat," added Steele urbanely. "There is no chalk mark there, Skinner."

Skinner jumped.

"N-no chalk mark, sir?" he gurgled. "I—I thought—"

"You thought precisely what my remark was intended to cause you to think, Skinner, and thereupon betrayed yourself," said Mr. Steele. "May I suggest that, in future, you should not undertake to measure your wits against mine? I assure you that you have no chance in such a competition—none whatever."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"The incident is now closed," said Steele, "and we will proceed with the lesson."

And the Remove proceeded.

"Ain't he a corker?" demanded Bob Cherry, when the Remove were dismissed, and streamed away down the passage. "Ain't he a downy bird? Fancy catching Skinner out like that! He said a fellow should be careful not to get a chalk smudge on his waistcoat—and so he should! Ha, ha, ha! And Skinner thought he had—"

"How was a fellow to guess?" grunted Skinner. "Another time—"

"Better not let there be another time!" chuckled Bob. "The downy bird catches the worm? Steele's a downy bird, and you're a worm, old bean! So keep off the grass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's a sportsman!" said Harry Wharton. "He let Smithy off for owning up. He's a sportsman!"

And even the Bouncer did not say nay to that!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next story in this grand series, entitled: "THE MYSTERY MASTER!" It's one of Frank Richards' very best!)

HERE'S ANOTHER prize-winning Greystriars Limerick!

A clever young boxer named Russell
Is brimful of tactics and hustle.
His left cuts the air;
His opponent's—where?
On the floor and—well out of the tussle!

Sent in by—W. L. HOWSLEY, Tansley Wood, Matlock, Derbyshire, who is now the recipient of one of this week's useful pocket wallets.

CLEVERCOVE'S WHEEZE!

(Continued from page 15.)

"It stands to reason that he couldn't possibly carry on as headmaster and remain invisible. As soon as the governors heard about it they'd sack him at once. So natchrally the Head would want to become visible again as soon as he found he'd lost the chair."

"My hat! Yes!"

"So you see we should be masters of the situation then," grinned Clevercove. "We could hide the chair somewhere where he'd never find it, and then dictate our own terms—say an extra week's holiday and half a dozen free feeds for the lot of us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a grate wheeze!" declared Jack Jolly enthusiastically. "I vote we carry it out as soon as possibul."

And that was what they did. They watched, and very soon a chance came their way. A tuck-hamper was seen staggering along the Sixth Form passage, and our heroes knew at once that the Head was with it. Rushing along to his study they were just in time to escape with the chair before the tuck-hamper came into view.

It was the work of a few minutes to take the chair up to a box room and hide it under a heap of rubbish. Then they sauntered downstairs, feeling that they had done something worth doing.

As they came into the Hall there seemed to be a grate deal of egg-sitting going on. A large crowd had gathered and the buzz of talk was deafening. But above the rest of the voices Jack Jolly could distinguish that of the invisible Head.

"Look everywhere, boys!" he was saying. "Leave no stone unturned! I simply must get that chair back! Fancy staying like this for the rest of my life! Yaaaaa!"

"Good! The old buffer's in a state of blue funk already!" murmured Jack Jolly. "Let's come for a stroll, you fellows!"

And Jack Jolly and his pals did NOT join in the hunt for the missing electric chair. Instead, they went for a stroll and indulged in plezzant daydreams concerning the free feeds and holidays they hoped to get as a result of Clevercove's wheeze!

THE END.

(It looks as though there's going to be some lively times at St. Sam's next week, doesn't it, chums? And there are, too! Watch 'em out, then, for—"JUSTLY REWARDED!" next week's treat of a grin.)

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